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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start the proceedings today, I want to welcome some special guests to our galleries. Today we have eleven students who volunteer from Holy Cross Junior High. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Lisa Saunders. Lisa is also the co-ordinator for the school's eat-smart breakfast program.

Welcome to our Chamber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I also want to introduce to the members of the House today a new Page, Matthew Drodge. Matthew is going to be joining us from here out through to replace Michael Cook. Michael had to leave earlier than planned. He has a work term that takes him out of the Province as a part of his continued studies. Michael, congratulations to you, and best wishes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for District of Cape St. Francis; the Member for the District of Lewisporte; the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune; the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of St. John's Centre; and the Member for the District of Lake Melville.

The hon. the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate John Slaney for being inducted into the AHL Hockey Hall of Fame.

John Slaney was first-round draft picked by the Washington Capitals in 1990; however, something all hockey fans will remember each year as the World Junior Championships comes along was one of the most memorable goals ever scored. In 1991, in the final game of the series, John scored the tie-breaking third period goal to give Canada the win against the USSR, giving Canada the win in the game and the tournament. This goal made him one of the most prominent names among hockey heroes.

On December 30, 2005, John became the all-time leading scorer among defensemen in AHL history with 454 points, and then he went on to win the Calder Cup with the Philadelphia Phantoms of the AHL in 2005.

John Slaney played in the NHL with the Washington Capitals, Colorado Avalanche, Los Angeles Kings, the Phoenix Coyotes, the Nashville Predators, the Pittsburgh Penguins, and the Philadelphia Flyers. A career from 1992 to 2011, he played both AHL and NHL with class and have the respect of all associated with the game. John is currently Assistant Coach for the Portland Pirates of the American Hockey League.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in congratulating John Slaney, the first Newfoundlander and Labradorian to be inducted into the AHL Hockey Hall of Fame.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. VERGE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize an outstanding and incredibly busy lady from my district. Maisie Roach was born in Port Blandford, graduated high school in Gambo, and attended Memorial University.

She began her career as a teacher and eventually married Major Robert Clark and, as a military wife, lived in various parts of Canada, the USA, and Europe. She began volunteering early in her life and went on to become involved in local government. In the past, she has been a drug and alcohol counsellor, a guider, an editor of a local newspaper, a church layperson, a chairperson of various committees, and a member of various boards.

Since 2001 Maisie has been the Mayor of Campbellton. She is the past President of the Lewisporte and area Chamber of Commerce, a board member of the MMSB, a member of the Lewisporte Area Economic Development Committee, and the Finance Chair of the Lewisporte and Area Co-operative.

In 2013, Maisie was honoured with the Queen's Jubilee Medal and a Senior of Distinction Award from the Province.

Honourable members, please join with me in recognizing Maisie Clark, an outstanding volunteer and a great citizen who continues to make an invaluable contribution to our Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to congratulate the St. Jacques-Coombs Cove Recreation Committee and Fitzgerald Academy for the tremendous accomplishment of their New Beginnings Community Park.

I commend the recreation committee, its Chair Craig Blagdon, Principal Krista Baker, Vice-Principal Adonna Hickey, and all the committee members and residents who made this project such a huge success.

Through the spirited determination of residents, eight communities will benefit from year-round

access to a fabulously equipped, beautiful playground. Thanks so much to this determined group of individuals for their success in obtaining this much sought after funding from the Let Them Be Kids organization. Thanks also to those residents who supported this project, and special thanks to the Osbourne family for donating the land on which the playground was built.

On build day it was great to see so many happy faces working together to create this wonderful playground that will be enjoyed by children for decades to come.

I ask that all hon. members join me in congratulating and thanking the St. Jacques-Coombs Cove Recreation Committee and Fitzgerald Academy and all their community partners for their outstanding contribution to ensuring our children have the best recreation facilities, comparable to anywhere in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise in this hon. House today to recognize a husband and wife team from Baie Verte for their outstanding volunteer efforts. Ed Hennebury has ridden his bike for Ride for Sight for thirty consecutive years, while his wife has over twenty-five years.

The Ride for Sight supports the Foundation Fighting Blindness, which is the only organization in Canada that only focuses on researching blindness caused by retinal degenerations.

Ed and Wilma said that besides their love for motorcycles, the money raised for research is a big part of their motivation for taking part every year. They said they would never be able to

raise the amounts they have raised without the support of residents, businesses, and organizations in the area. Regardless if it was rain, sleet, snow, or hail, Ed and Wilma have been there every single year. In fact, they are the only ones remaining from the original group.

The Ride for Sight faithful directors, with their outstanding efforts, and caring hearts are indeed making miracles happen.

I ask all members to join me in applauding Ed and Wilma for their outstanding commitment to Ride for Sight that makes success stories possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am thrilled to celebrate all the folks who make breakfast for hundreds of students every year at Holy Cross Junior High. Every morning at 7:30 a group of volunteer students and volunteers from the community set everything up, they cook a scrumptious, healthy breakfast, they serve it and then they clean up.

It is a perfect way for many students who would not otherwise start the day well-nourished and ready to get down to work. I have helped out with breakfast and I am so impressed with the students who come to school early and help. They are true leaders. They give of their time, and in turn they learn their way around the kitchen. They have joined us here today, Mr. Speaker: Nick Nolander, Nick Evans, Mohamed Haziri, Rabije Haziri, Ricky Harding, Brandon Hurley, Emily Newman, Amy Tremblett, Zach Dunne, Terry Lundrigan, Dylan Callahan, and their marvelous teacher, Lisa Saunders.

Staff and parents who volunteer at Holy Cross are also a crucial part of making the breakfast program a huge success and it is generously supported by Kids Eat Smart, and all of this is

under the fabulous leadership of Principal Linda Hart.

Congratulations, Holy Cross Junior High School for creating a caring, inclusive community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the Lake Melville Xtreme female under-20 hockey all-stars who were victorious at the Lab Cup, held March 21-23 at the EJ Broomfield Arena in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The Lab Cup, Mr. Speaker, is a preparatory tournament for the provincials that were held this past weekend. The female under-20 team played their championship game against the Labrador West Lakers, winning 6-3.

The team used their momentum from winning the Lab Cup to bolster their effort and win the bronze medal at the Ladies U20-B Tournament held in Springdale. Bringing hardware back, Mr. Speaker, from a tournament is something to be proud of, and this team can certainly be proud.

The team consisted of Crystal Michelin, Nicole Kennedy, Jenna Turner, Caleigh Ivany, Maddy Cahill, Sabrina Warr, Andrea White, Jodi Loder, Katlyn Winters, Laura Baikie, Julia Hutchings, Brittany Patey, Anna Hutchings, trainer Hooker Broomfield, and coach Mr. Garry Dove.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this hon. House to join with me in congratulating the Lake Melville Xtreme female under-20 all-stars in winning the Lab Cup and a bronze medal at provincials.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to speak about the excitement that is building in the Province's ocean technology sector as we prepare to host OCEANS' 14, which will be held in St. John's this coming September.

Themed, *Oceans: Where Challenge Becomes Opportunity*, OCEANS' 14 will provide an international platform for Newfoundland and Labrador's ocean technology sector. The conference will bring greater awareness to the Province's research and development in emerging technologies and extraordinary marine infrastructure, as well as bring attention to local leading-edge companies operating in this sector. A forum of scientists and business leaders to exchange their knowledge, OCEANS' 14 is expected to attract over 1,200 delegates.

Mr. Speaker, OCEANS' 14 is jointly sponsored by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the Ocean Engineering Society, as well as the Marine Technology Society. Previous conferences have been hosted in California, Virginia, Hawaii, and Washington.

Our government recognizes that our success in ocean technology is a result of strong collaboration among industry, academia, and all levels of government. Newfoundland and Labrador is home to leading ocean technology education and training, cutting-edge research and development initiatives, and unique infrastructure.

Through Memorial University, Canada's leading oceans research facility, we are privileged to have one of the most respected centres for marine learning and applied research, the largest

flume tank in the world at the Marine Institute, and the leading national centre of excellence in cold ocean technologies and harsh environment operations at C-CORE.

Mr. Speaker, at last year's conference in San Diego, the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development's Ocean Technology Branch was awarded the prestigious Compass International Award. The award is presented for outstanding achievement in the advancement of ocean technology and is granted to organizations that have demonstrated exemplary contributions to the industry. I am very proud of our Ocean Technology Branch for being recognized in this manner.

As a government we are proud to be hosting OCEANS' 14. I look forward to welcoming delegates so they can see first-hand the world-class capabilities we have in Newfoundland and Labrador and the extensive potential we have in the ocean technology sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. These conferences are indeed great opportunities to share knowledge, make contacts, and promote the industry and Newfoundland and Labrador. We know the importance the ocean plays in our Province and welcome the opportunity to help those who earn their livelihoods from ocean industries, whether it is from the fishery, whether it is in oil and gas, or whether it is in advanced technologies.

We understand we really need to move forward in fostering the entities we have in the Province to build an economic growth cluster around ocean technology, utilizing the Marine Institute, C-CORE, MUN, the College of the North Atlantic, RDC, and other industry associations

like NATI. We can foster that and increase and share that information.

If we look at the ocean technology initiatives funded by the Department of IBRD, the sector that is implementing the strategy only spent two-thirds of its budget last year, which amounted to just over \$500,000. We need to see initiatives announced from this strategy, Mr. Speaker.

British Columbia is building the world's smartest coastline. The federal government is contributing money. IBM is leveraging federal money for ocean networks for their Smart Oceans program. We need to be doing similar things. We need to see what we are doing.

I look forward to what is going to come out of OCEANS' 14 and I congratulate all the people involved in that committee.

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 would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Congratulations to the Ocean Technology Branch on their award, the prestigious Compass International Award. We are the leaders in our industry here; we are born of the ocean, so the ocean is ours. We can pretty much share in the technologies that we are learning about.

We also have to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, too, that along with advancements in technologies and getting into deeper water, we have to make sure that we are going to be looking after issues like worker safety, we have to make sure that we are going to be able to clean up a spill if we are going to be drilling into deep water; but, most of all, a big case for humanity right now that should be looked at, not only by government, but industry alike, is the case for climate change.

More work has to be done to make sure that technologies can help us change what is happening out there in the environment so that we can become stewards of our environment at the same time. I am looking forward to everything that is going to be happening with this conference in September, and am looking forward to hearing exactly what some of the results are going to be in future advancements.

Thank you very much.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update the members of this hon. House on the latest addition to infrastructure at Memorial University's Grenfell Campus. I recently joined Premier Marshall for the official opening of Grenfell Complex in Corner Brook, and had an opportunity to tour this world-class new residence and meet some of the students attending Grenfell Campus.

The Grenfell Residence Complex provides safe, affordable, and accessible living options on campus for about 200 students, increasing residence capacity to 600 students. The residence was built with \$23.3 million in funding from the provincial government, and is a home-away-from-home for students while they complete their post-secondary studies, establish their career goals, and ultimately secure long-term employment in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, this modern, state-of-the-art building has five floors with 200 rooms. Each floor includes a kitchen and other areas where students gather for meals and to socialize. A partnership between Grenfell Campus and the College of the North Atlantic allows twenty-three of those rooms to be available for College of the North Atlantic students.

This government has made strategic investments to support post-secondary infrastructure with a total commitment of \$88.3 million for the construction of the new Grenfell Residence, and

two new residences at the St. John's Campus of Memorial University. In addition to providing affordable on-campus student housing, these residences help alleviate rental housing pressures in both cities.

The word is spreading that this Province is an ideal place to get an advanced education that is both high quality and affordable, which was certainly referenced in an article on CBC this morning, both here and national. We are making it easier for students to begin their careers with as little debt as possible. As announced in Budget 2014, the provincial government is providing \$14.7 million over two years to eliminate provincial student loans, with a projected investment of approximately \$50.6 million over five years. Since 2005, we have invested more than \$282 million to freeze tuition fees for our students.

Because of our continued and significant investments in programming, infrastructure and other needs, post-secondary institutions in this Province have been able to further support students in such areas as housing, Mr. Speaker, in Corner Brook, and everywhere I go, students tell me how these investments are having a positive impact on their lives, and I am proud to say that our students are the envy of the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, having worked with students for nearly two-and-a-half decades, I can certainly speak to the challenges of students securing affordable housing.

Our vast geography means that not all students experience the same financial burden while completing post-secondary education. Many students have to move hundreds of kilometres from home to attend school. Increasing residence space is key to helping these students achieve their education.

I am relieved to also hear the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing finally acknowledge a rental housing crisis in the Province. I find it curious he will cite this crisis to tout investments in student housing, but will wash his hands of any responsibility on housing issues beyond their social housing program.

This government lacks a comprehensive housing plan. The minister's selective referencing of housing shortages illustrates this. In fact, Corner Brook has the lowest rental vacancy rate in the Province. Students at Grenfell will pay roughly \$400 per month to secure a place at residence with phone and Internet access.

I do applaud the government for investing in student housing. I also encourage them to consider how to help others who do not have access to safe or affordable housing.

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. I am glad that the Grenfell Campus students have a new residence providing affordable and accessible units for more students. Adequate student housing is so important and was neglected for so long in this Province that it became a critical need and contributed to the overall housing crunch.

It is too bad that when government decided to commit to more university housing, it did not think of the housing needs of College of the North Atlantic students in Labrador West, where many students still have inadequate housing. Government talks about wanting graduates to stay in the Province but success will depend on making sure there is affordable housing for young people after they graduate, not just while they are in school.

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.

The CEO of Nalcor admitted today that the cost of Muskrat Falls is under pressure and that it will go up due to labour and material costs.

I ask the Premier: Have you had any discussions with Nalcor about these increasing costs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, as part of the oversight that government has put in place for Nalcor – obviously, we have discussions with the CEO and other officials of Nalcor to discuss costs. As Mr. Ed Martin, the CEO of Nalcor has indicated, the cost of the project – there is a construction cost, there is the financing cost, and there will be the cost of operations.

Nalcor is owned by the people of the Province, Mr. Speaker, and we want Nalcor to complete that project in a way that will lead to low-cost electricity for the people of the Province; and to ensure that in the future, based on the investments that they are making in oil and gas and in electricity and in fabrication, that they will create much in the way of wealth that will come to the people of the Province to create, hopefully, a heritage fund someday, reduce debt, and be part of our general revenues to build hospitals and schools that the people want.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I say to the Premier what I asked was about the discussions with Nalcor about this – and that is important that you do provide that oversight, but Nalcor is only one year into construction of the Muskrat Falls Project and already reporting that costs are rising.

I ask the Premier: What is the magnitude of these increases, and will it increase the amount that you plan to borrow next year?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, Nalcor files a monthly report which clearly indicates the total amount of money that they have spent to date; I think the last report was for January. I know the Leader of the Opposition has said in this House on a number of occasions that Nalcor has spent \$5 billion, and, of course, that is incorrect. Nalcor has spent around a billion dollars.

We are going to see what the costs will be. There are still a number of contracts to let. We know that with respect to the financing they had budgeted a number, a cost of the financing, and that has come in substantially less, around \$300 million less than they anticipated it would be.

There are pressures in our economy which is very hot right now. There is so much employment. It is hard to get workers. The cost of workers has gone up. Those pressures will continue to exist but, overall, we expect that the project will be one that will be to the benefit of the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I did not hear the Premier say is if the project would come in on budget. What I have said in the past is not about how much the \$5 billion spent on it was – \$5 billion in total of

committed and spent are usually the words that I use, I say, Mr. Speaker.

The CEO of Nalcor said this morning that first power at Muskrat Falls is likely to be delayed.

I ask the Premier: When do you expect to see first power and how much will this impact cost?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, what the Opposition Leader is referring to today is the independent engineer's review that was committed by us and we wanted this to be made public. It was made public today and there is a tremendous amount of information in there. It is a great report, very technical, very detailed, and provides good oversight. I certainly appreciate the opposite member's comment that it is important to provide oversight, exactly what we did when we set up the government oversight committee.

Mr. Speaker, within that there are tremendous positive statements about the work of Nalcor and the project. Added to that, there are some comments in there that certainly are important for Nalcor in strengthening the project as we go forward over the next three to four years. Built in around that are some discussions about cost and about scheduling, and it is important to stay on schedule and make sure the project is delivered, as we said it is going to, to the people of the Province.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is important to stay on schedule and it is important to provide oversight, although the

minister did not feel that way just a few weeks ago.

I ask the minister one more time: When do you expect to see first power and how much will this impact the cost of this project?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the target date for first power is 2017 and it is highlighted in the report. I am sure the Opposition Leader will get a chance to take a look at it. It has been clearly indicated by the independent engineer that we are still on target and on schedule.

There is a range in this type of project, Mr. Speaker. There is a range of time frame. Admittedly, we are in the low range. It is an aggressive management commitment that Nalcor has made on behalf of the people of the Province around cost and around scheduling. We are still on schedule. We are in the low range. There is some flexibility, but any change in scheduling will be around how we can save money in that process, which again is a commitment we have made to the people of the Province and that Nalcor has made.

This will be the least-cost project. This will address our needs for power in the future, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2012, government said that a one-year delay in Muskrat Falls construction will increase costs \$300 million.

I ask the Premier: Is it still accurate today to suggest if you miss this project, if this project is delayed by one year, that the cost is still \$300 million?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, no one has talked about a one-year delay. From time to time when you have plans in terms of deadlines and scheduling, sometimes it makes sense to extend the schedule if you can possibly save costs. That happens. Obviously we want the project to be built at the lowest-possible cost so that the rates to the people of the Province will be low. Sometimes you have to pay a little more if you want the reliability of certain equipment.

We are confident that Mr. Martin and his team will make the necessary decisions, and they will provide the necessary oversight, as we will also, to ensure we have a project that is a credit to the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier said that he has met and discussed costs.

I ask the Premier: Has the CEO of Nalcor given any number of how much this project will be increased?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, a project of this nature, as most people would understand – \$6 billion-plus project, thousands of workers coming and going, contracts coming and going – there are various aspects that you will need to nail down to get an exact figure. We have discussed that publicly and Mr. Martin of Nalcor has.

In terms of a budget for the project and where we are, there has been tremendous work done in

the DG 3 numbers, Mr. Speaker, the early numbers in projects and planning. That work has been validated by the independent engineers as being good, solid work by Nalcor.

Around the operations, Mr. Speaker, around the financing and around the capital costs, these are three important areas that will collectively make up the project costs. We are continuing in the early stages to get those numbers. When we are ready, we will certainly make them available to the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some things around a project the size of this is justified as being commercially sensitive. Blacking out how much power Muskrat Falls will produce, just does not make any sense.

I ask the Premier: You stated many times in this House that Muskrat Falls will produce 824 megawatts of power, so why is this information blacked out in the engineer's report?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that has been the general number that has been out there to the public, recognizing we are going to have a great need for power in this Province. That is a commitment we have made to the people of the Province. This is a great project, Mr. Speaker, and I know the Leader of the Opposition supports the project.

With respect to some of the information and details, we have been very clear to the people of the Province and Nalcor has been clear. Any information that would have any financial harm or potential on the awarding of contracts and the value of contracts, it is best we hold onto that to

protect the people of the Province and the ratepayers of the Province.

The issue around the power, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly is around supply and demand and specific numbers. There is a concern as we go forward that will have a negative impact on contracts, awarding of contracts, and value of contracts if it is made public. We do commit, when we are in a better position to do so, we will make it public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will make it very simple, because 824 megawatts is how you supported and financed this project.

Is that number less today than it was when you sanctioned this project?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the number publicly made is 824 megawatts. That is our commitment for 824 megawatts. When you get into the smaller details of the available power, it has been redacted. It is not made public at this time because of the sensitivities around that, Mr. Speaker.

The negotiations that are ongoing, not only in the awarding of contracts, Mr. Speaker, but, as well, we have clearly indicated that this project will bring renewable value to the people of the Province, rather than spill the water, as has been often suggested by the other side. Mr. Speaker, we are going to sell that power through Emera, to the link and get it out into the North American markets so it will add value to the people of the Province, so that as long as the water flows we will have money coming in to the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, the *Motor Vessel Northern Ranger*, which provides service to the Coast of Labrador, went dead in the water many times over the last two seasons due to engine problems. It is a dangerous situation for any vessel, especially with passengers onboard. There have been at least three engine room fires on board the vessel last summer.

I ask the minister: What refit work has been done to the *Northern Ranger* to ensure such serious breakdowns do not occur during the next two seasons?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the *Northern Ranger* is in for refit now, and there are two engines that are going to be replaced in the *Northern Ranger*. We have purchased two new engines for that. They will be replaced and the *Northern Ranger* will be out again this year.

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, every season there is an issue with getting service started because of ice conditions. There was a delay last year, even though Cartwright, Black Tickle and Rigolet were ice free and vessels steamed into Lake Melville while the *Northern Ranger* and the *Astron* sat idle in Lewisporte.

I ask the minister: Last year it took three weeks before air service was provided as an alternative. Will the minister commit to immediate air service, if required, as he has done elsewhere in the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have been talking with the different Aboriginal groups on the North Coast who depend on this service for their supplies. We do have a contingency plan in place, and if the air service is necessary due to ice conditions, we are already working on that and it will be provided.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims to have a new approach to government by being open and transparent and listening to the people of the Province. With Bill 6, there were no consultations with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Premier: Now that you claim to be open, transparent and listening, why are you not listening to Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador who are asking to stop this piece of legislation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we are a government that is deeply committed to ensuring that young people have more opportunities than ever before to be engaged in their communities. Let me say that first and foremost.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Secondly, I would say to the member opposite, there have been multiple opportunities for Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to have input into this important issue, dating back as far as 2012. Our discussions with MNL are ongoing. We had a great discussion with the board of directors just

yesterday, and we are committed to working together to advance youth engagement in communities around this Province.

This is a high priority for me; it is a high priority for this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, MNL will be holding its Municipal Symposium on May 1-3. This would be a great opportunity to consult with MNL and its members on Bill 6 and have input from the people mostly affected.

I ask the Premier: With your commitment to being an open and listening government, will you withdraw this bill and commit to holding consultations with MNL and its members of municipalities at the Municipal Symposium?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, from Pouch Cove and Paradise and Witless Bay, all the way to Wabush and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, there are municipalities speaking out in support of Bill 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: I value and respect the relationship that we have with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. I look forward to discussing this issue and many more issues when I attend the symposium in Gander. We are working co-operatively on a whole bunch of important issues to communities in this Province, including our new fiscal framework, and I look forward to working with MNL to advance youth engagement as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, government provides ABA therapy to children up to Grade 3. The problem is many children are aging out of this service, sometimes even before diagnosis – but the fact remains they need ABA.

So I ask the minister: Why has this service not been extended this year so children can get the help they require?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2014 had very many meaningful improvements for people in the entire health care sector, especially for children with autism and other developmental conditions. This is an issue that I heard from many of my caucus colleagues, my Cabinet colleagues, I heard through pre-Budget consultation.

Mr. Speaker, we have listened. In this year's Budget, we have committed \$2 million, going to \$3.9 million next year for autism services so that we can reduce the wait times and get more people diagnosed and into the ABA system. So, our commitment is solid and this is an issue that we all agree on this side of the House that we cannot afford not to do for our children, especially children with autism.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, government says they are listening, but I heard an awful lot of people outside Confederation Building today talking about this issue and saying that there is still more that needs to be done.

We are the only Province in Canada without teaching assistants. Schools are sending children with autism home because they do not have the resources to deal with them. Parents are having to give up their jobs to home-school

these children because they have no other choice.

I ask the minister: How does this fit with your theme of inclusive education?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, one of the first requests that the board submitted this year to the Budget process was about increased student assistant time. Mr. Speaker, that is about providing supports for the student and for the teachers who are working with those students on a daily basis.

We invested \$1 million, Mr. Speaker, in that this year. Our commitment to the children with autism is as it is with all other children. We want to provide them with the service, and our commitment in the Budget this year speaks exactly to that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister must not have heard what I said because I said we are the only Province without teaching assistants and he mentioned student assistants, a completely different thing.

Autism is affecting one in sixty-eight children in our Province. We have a wait-list with about 400 children just waiting to see a specialist. We have children who need ABA but cannot receive it and a school system that cannot deal with it.

I ask the minister: If this is not enough proof that we need a provincial strategy on autism, what is?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that myself and the Minister of Health have done now on several occasions; we have met with the Autism Society. We have met with them to discuss their concerns. Will there be continuing issues? Indeed, there will and we will continue to work with them to find resolutions.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment this year for early diagnosis: twenty-two additional positions coming in; after next year, thirty positions. That is for the sole purpose of diagnosing early and intervening early, Mr. Speaker. It is about commitment to the children with autism.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, we have community care homes in the CBS area that take care of residents with severe and persistent mental illness. We have been advised that a twenty-bed home in the program is closing its doors as of May 23. The reason they are closing the doors is because government does not provide them with enough funding to cover the staff required. The owner has essentially been working twenty-four hours a day and is simply burnt out.

I ask the minister: Are you aware of it, and what are you planning to do to fix this?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly as a government are aware of the excellent service that these community care homes and personal care homes provide to people who reside in them. That is why, Mr. Speaker, in this year's Budget we committed to increase the subsidy to personal care homes from \$1,850 a month to \$1,950 a month. That shows our commitment to homes.

I am not aware of that particular situation, but I can follow up. I am careful of following up with him; he was rather cute last week in one of his questions. If the information is there, I will certainly provide it to him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, in 2009 government sold the fish plant in New Ferolle for \$1. Workers have since been getting very little work, but they have not given up hope. They are now petitioning government to help them find a trusted local operator.

I ask the minister: What plan does he have to ensure those workers can get back to work this season?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we work with industry and rationalization has gone on over the past number of years. Where there are opportunities, we have demonstrated quite clearly that we will work with industry, whatever means it needs to be to ensure activity in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Whether that is our very successful aquaculture industry which this year has grown to \$200 million or our wild fishery and what we are seeing this year in terms of last year's report that collectively there was over \$1.1 billion in production value.

If there are issues out there in regard to specific operations and you want to come forward and have discussions on, we are open to that. It is about rationalization and making sure those involved in communities, in processing, harvesting, and all of that sector, have the capacity to have good enterprises and they have incomes that are reflective of what they need to live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, this government should be ashamed of how they failed the people and communities of New Ferolle, Shoal Cove West, and Reefs Harbour since they sold this community plant for \$1. All the people want is to get up in the morning and go to work.

I ask the minister: What do you intend to do to work with these people to help find a local operator, or will you continue to starve them out of work?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, the fishing industry, like any other industry, is driven by private investment. It is driven by capital, like any other industry. There are investors who invest in processing operations. Harvesters invest in their enterprises. All of that is driven by investment. If there is an opportunity and the business model works, that works.

Our investment in the fishery is second to none. We have talked about the inventory we have done in the past number of years, technology, science, tens of millions of dollars, made a further investment in regard to CETA of \$120 million.

We do not hear from the hon. member talking about whether he agrees to it, whether he thinks it is a good investment of the taxpayers' money. We believe it is, because the fishery is just as important to any other industry in Newfoundland and Labrador and we support it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, overcrowding problems in our schools did not occur overnight, especially in the Mount Pearl area. It has been ongoing for years under this government.

I ask the minister: Why did you not take a more proactive approach when these issues were brought to your attention years ago rather than waiting until it contorted into a full-blown crisis?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, this issue was brought to my attention by three MHAs who were on this side of the floor, probably about a year and a half or so ago. I said yesterday this is a very emotional issue, there is no doubt about it, and I as minister cannot intervene in this particular issue. The board has made their decision.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to consider this. What makes a good school are the staff, the teachers, and the parent community who come together to offer quality education to the students. That is what I would ask everyone involved to do.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South for a quick question without preamble.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Knowing that these problems still plague –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

A quick question.

MR. LANE: This is the question.

Mr. Speaker, what are your plans to add full-day Kindergarten –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

Parents of children with autism gathered outside this building today pleading with government to pay attention to their needs. They wondered why no one from government was there to listen.

I ask the Premier: Why is this government afraid to hear the real stories from people that we heard?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are certainly there to listen. We have met regularly with the Autism Society, both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, this is an issue we take very seriously. These are children we are talking about; these are children with developmental concerns. That is why we showed our concern this year in this year's Budget.

When you hear that a child who goes into the intensive ABA program and 30 per cent of those children can be incorporated into the regular school stream, we cannot afford not to do that for our children. There is no better investment we can make in our children, especially children with autism.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I suggest the minister does not hear the real story and she does not know what is happening with the so-called inclusion because there are not enough resources for them to fit in well and to really have their needs met.

I ask the Premier: When will this government put in place all the resources needed to see that children with autism in this Province get the same excellent care as in other provinces? Because believe me, they are far ahead of us.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also saw the press release that the Autism Society put out post-Budget 2014 commending government for their investment into autism.

Mr. Speaker, we are putting twenty-two positions into autism this year for early diagnosis and intervention; going to thirty positions next year. We have clearly listened. We are putting in one more developmental pediatrician, twenty child management specialists, one social worker, one clinical lead, three occupational therapists, and four speech language pathologists. The Autism Society was supportive of our announcement.

Everywhere I have gone around the Province since the Budget, the one thing that they talk about a lot is our investment in to children both from a full-day Kindergarten perspective to early learning, to autism, and everything in between.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Parents and professionals at the demonstration today are saying that is not sufficient, and that is what my question was about.

Mr. Speaker, today we learned that Muskrat Falls is over budget and very likely it will be

behind schedule. Last December we asked about overspending based on concerns of massive cost overruns of a similar project in Manitoba. The Natural Resources Minister told us at the time to trust the experts at Nalcor.

I ask the Premier: Can we trust them now?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Without reservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: I am so glad he has such confidence. Government's plan is to give Nalcor more money in this Budget.

What is government doing about the overspending, keep giving Nalcor more money?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Third Party does not see what the vision for Nalcor is and what it was set up to accomplish. It is owned by the people of the Province. They are not a foreign monopoly coming from somewhere. They are not the mafia or something like that. They are a company set up to take the assets of the people of the Province, owned by the people of the Province, to develop wealth for the people of the Province in oil, in electricity, in fabrication. We are investing.

You cannot stand on the wharf wanting your ship to come in when you did not send a ship out. We are investing, and that investment will come back to the people of the Province through revenues in the future and there will be wealth for the people of the Province that we have not seen in the past.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I do not think the Premier is that sure of himself.

I ask the Premier: When did he know about the cost overruns? The government has been sitting on this report since November, 2013, why have we not heard about it before?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, there is a plethora of oversight and documentation that is filed every week that comes from Nalcor. Here we had the CEO and the head of the Muskrat Falls Project out talking to the media, telling them what is going on. Documents come out every month. There are tons of reports, and the reports say exactly each month how many people are hired, how many people are working, how much money is being spent. It is all there, and that information will be made available to the people of the Province. It is their project, they are entitled to know.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Facility Association Insurance Rates for taxis are going to increase if the recent application through the Public Utilities Board is approved. Mr. Speaker, if commercial vehicles get tagged, then consumers are going to be next.

Will government step in and protect taxi drivers and consumers from this outlandish and outrageous increase they are asking for?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are certainly aware of the situation, I say to the hon. member. Protecting consumers is certainly a priority for our government, but he does understand the process.

The PUB is an independent board that oversees and regulates pricing, Mr. Speaker, as well as rates when it comes to insurance. We are concerned when we hear about rates going up, just like everybody else is, but we need to let the process unfold, Mr. Speaker, and we will find out what that decision is shortly. We are keeping an eye on the situation and our concerns are out there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, this has been unfolding for a long time now. Almost every morning the media is filled with reports of drivers being nailed with no insurance, no licence, no registration. Huge fines are not getting these drivers off the road.

I ask the minister: As consumers now we pay, what is government going to do to address the present situation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am actually amazed that the NDP are presenting the position on the House of Assembly they want government to interfere with the Public Utilities Board. I cannot believe that position has been articulated here today. After all the debate we have had back and forth

here about the independence of the Public Utilities Board, in all other issues we have discussed here, and the positions put forth by the member opposite that government should stay away from the Public Utilities Board and let them do their job, because it was convenient for the discussion of the day.

Mr. Speaker, today it is more convenient because of the issue he is putting forward that he wants us to interfere. Well I say that is just shameful for the hon. member to stand in this House and get on with the likes of tripe of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. John's East for a very quick question.

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, the problem is easily solved. Government knows it. Why don't you just ask the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Justice for a very quick response.

MR. KING: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that the member flip-flops all the time on the policy positions of the NDP here in the House of Assembly when we have more important issues to debate.

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: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand here today and table two documents. One document is a letter awarding the tender for the roadwork in Bay d'Espoir, a two-year contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: The other one that I would like to table today is for the Fleur de Lys and La Scie tender that has been awarded.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: 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 autism spectrum disorder has been estimated to occur in as many – this says one in eight-eight children, Mr. Speaker, but that actually has been updated to one in sixty-eight since then; and

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: WHEREAS long wait-lists are forcing parents to wait up to two years before their children receive needed pediatric assessment and diagnostic services; and

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about a variety of issues related to autism spectrum disorder here in the House of Assembly. We met a bunch of parents, children, and other professionals who work with people with autism spectrum disorder in front of the House of Assembly today to talk about some of this.

There are really three key issues, I think, we really have to think about addressing. One is the elimination of the wait-list for pediatric diagnosis. Ontario announced yesterday that, in fact, they have a multi-year plan now to entirely eliminate the wait-list for a diagnosis for speech

language, for occupational therapy, and those sorts of things. They will entirely eliminate that.

We also need to look at the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program. We know that many children are getting diagnosed too late to participate in it. Some of the parents today said if you do not get the diagnosis early enough, then why doesn't the government let those children get an equivalent number of years as it would be in the case where they got the early diagnosis? That is something else to consider.

Last year, government was generous enough to recognize we needed to extend the eligibility requirement so it was extended. People are asking why we did not do the same this year.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: These are some of the issues.

MR. SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

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 government has a responsibility to ensure that Internet access is broadly available so that people have the right to be able to access the Internet in order to exercise and enjoy their rights of freedom of expression and opinion, and other fundamental human rights; and

WHEREAS Pines Cove still remains without broadband services, despite both adjacent communities of Shoal Cove East and Green Island Cove have service; and

WHEREAS residents rely on Internet services for education, business, communication, and social activity; and

WHEREAS wireless and wired technologies exist to provide broadband service to rural communities to replace slower dial-up service;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to assist providers to ensure Pines Cove is in receipt of broadband Internet services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by all residents of Pines Cove. Pines Cove is a community that has a major project happening right in its own backyard with multimillion dollar contracts awarded for the cable crossing as part of the Muskrat Falls Project going across the Strait of Belle Isle.

We have seen where those who would be economically impact such as scallop fishers in that area receive compensation upwards of \$3 million for their loss. We are seeing a lot of activity happening right in Pines Cove's backyard. They are being left behind by this government when it comes to providing Internet services.

The option of providing broadband to Pines Cove is a very simple solution. It is very cost effective. It is a matter of changing the telephone exchange from 456 to 475 to tap into the capacity of Green Island Cove. It is simple and very low cost. It should be done. We could provide high-speed Internet to another community in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I hope that under the Rural Broadband Initiative, or working with Nalcor and other developers happening in the Pines Cove region, that they will see broadband Internet come 2014.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS MICHAEL: 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 of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the US Centers for Disease Control now estimates that autism spectrum disorder affects one in sixty-eight children, which represents a 30 per cent increase from the estimate two years ago; and

WHEREAS early diagnosis of ASD is essential because there is a critical developmental period when early intervention is vital for future success of children with ASD; and

WHEREAS there are approximately 380 children on a two-year wait-list for an ASD diagnosis, which in this Province can only be made by a developmental pediatrician and there is only one available at the Janeway Children's Hospital; and

WHEREAS although Budget 2014 announced that another developmental pediatrician will be recruited, more must be done to reduce the wait-list for a diagnosis so that children can get the early treatment they need; and

WHEREAS in other provinces an ASD diagnosis can be made by specialists certified and trained in ADOS;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to allow other specialists trained and certified with ADOS to make the autism spectrum disorder diagnosis.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, there were parents outside of this building today at noon with their children who have autism spectrum disorder and they told us their stories, parents who signed this petition, parents who have met with government, and parents who are trying to get government to listen to them. They have told their stories. They told their stories to the media. Government was not there to hear.

I hope they are going to follow the news this evening and hear what these parents said as they talked about that wait-list, a wait-list for diagnosis, which is not going to be affected by just one more person put in place to do those diagnoses. That wait-list is going to go on and that wait-list means, Mr. Speaker, children are not getting the treatment they need because by the time they are diagnosed they are not eligible for the treatment they require.

This government goes on talking about the money it is spending, but it has not put a full plan in place. They need integration. You have the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Community Services, each playing a role with regard to children and persons with autism spectrum disorder, Mr. Speaker, and they are in their silos. We do not have a holistic program working together for the good of these children. The parents are so frustrated. It is painful to meet with them, because of the frustration they express. This government refuses to listen to them, to even see that frustration because they do not want to be touched by it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today to present a petition concerning Route 440, Hughes Brook hill:

WHEREAS we are concerned over the deplorable condition of the pavement on Hughes Brook hill, Route 440; and

WHEREAS many residents of the Towns of Hughes Brook, Irishtown-Summerside, Meadows, Gillams, McIver's and Cox's Cove travel this road on a daily basis; and

WHEREAS after repeated requests for repairs to the pavement, the road has continued to deteriorate; and

WHEREAS the ruts in the pavement are creating a safety hazard; and

WHEREAS we feel that the condition of this road presents an accident waiting to happen;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to give serious consideration to making repairs to this road.

Mr. Speaker, we have residents here from Irishtown, Cox's Cove, and Meadows who signed the petition. I say to the minister and to the residents, there has not been a tender let for this portion of the road.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed today there was one tabled in the House for Fleur de Lys and for the Bay d'Espoir highway. I cannot wait for the one that includes this hill to be tabled also, to see how much is done; how much of this Hughes Brook hill.

It is good to see the minister was listening to the residents for this section of the road. Again, Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister was listening but before I can stand up and say this is done, I need to see how much is being done exactly. I look forward to the minister tabling the tender as he did for the other two PC districts here today.

The people in this area heard about it –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me? I say to the minister, pardon me? Do you want to table it now?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: Oh, okay. I just thought the minister might want to table it now.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Direct your comments to the Chair, please.

MR. JOYCE: I just thought the minister wanted to table it now because he was saying something. I need to see the exact number of kilometres that is going to be done, Mr. Speaker, because it is a very serious condition, as are other parts.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to read today a letter from the Towns of Lark Harbour-York Harbour about the deterioration of the roads. There are three major – and I know the minister is aware of it. There is engineering work being done, and I thank you, Minister, for that, for the three major areas. There is major work that needs to be done with that, but there are other areas.

As I told the minister, between Blow Me Down Brook and York Harbour there are some major areas, Mr. Speaker, that need to be fixed, but I need to see this tender. So I ask the minister, with all due respect, and this is in no way being disrespectful, seeing he tabled the tenders for the two PC districts, I ask for the same privilege as a Member of the House of Assembly for the Bay of Islands, that hopefully by tomorrow we will have this tendered for what is going to be done in Hughes Brook.

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 of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive approach to

domestic violence in a court setting that fully understood and dealt with the complex issues of domestic violence; and

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

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy, but saddened at the same time, to stand and present this petition yet again. I am not sure what else there is to be said about the situation of the Family Violence Intervention Court.

It has been established time and again that it was an effective court. The Minister of Justice said that himself. The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women said that herself: that it was not a policy decision, that in fact the court was doing what it was intended to do. We all know that.

This court was keeping women victims of violence safer and keeping their children safer. We know that the judiciary supported it, the police supported it, prosecution supported it, defence supported it, Victim Services supported it, Child, Youth and Family Services supported it. It was all supported all the way around.

Now government is saying it was a budgetary decision. Mr. Speaker, we know there were a number of programs that were cut back in the Justice budget last Budget and the money came back. We know for instance in the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation in last year's Budget they were cut by \$4 million. In this year's Budget they are getting another \$2 million back and another \$2 million back the following year.

This is half a million dollars, Mr. Speaker, to protect vulnerable women and children in the Province. This is inexcusable to cut this very important program.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS there are extreme overcrowding issues in St. Peter's Elementary and Mount Pearl Senior High; a direct result of poor planning by the Department of Education; and

WHEREAS the solution imposed by the English School Board to deal with this now crisis situation will have a devastating impact on many students, families and teachers in Mount Senior High, Mount Pearl Intermediate, St. Peter's Elementary and Newtown Elementary; and

WHEREAS there are other less disruptive solutions which can be introduced to alleviate this overcrowding issue including capital

investment as a preferred option, as well as catchment area realignment; and

WHEREAS the English School Board was not provided with the financial flexibility by the Minister of Education to explore other more suitable options; and

WHEREAS the government has intervened in board decisions in the past, such as in 2005 in Bishop's Falls, reversing the closure of Leo Burke Academy;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitions, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to intervene in this matter, commit appropriate resources to the English School Board and instruct them to develop more suitable options.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Now, this is the first petition that I am presenting on behalf of the students, parents, and teachers of Mount Pearl, but I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure the Minister of Education, that it certainly is not the last. If he thinks he has been successful in hiding behind the English school district, he is sadly mistaken.

If he thinks that because tomorrow is the last day before the Easter break in this House of Assembly, that this is all going to go away over Easter, I can also tell the Minister of Education he is sadly mistaken. This is not going away. As a matter of fact, this is ramping up. I have spoken to many parents, students, grandparents and so on, and they are very, very angry. That is putting it mildly.

I would suggest that the Minister of Education is going to be very busy over the Easter break responding to e-mails, Facebook messages, tweets and so on. I can assure you that is going to happen because I have spoken to a lot of people and that is what they intend to do, to fill his e-mail box. We are going to get petitions going. This is going to be ramping up big time because this issue is too serious to be swept

under the rug, Mr. Speaker. So, I would say to the minister again, in closing, that this is not the end of this issue; this is only the beginning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the lack of services and supports in the school system is a serious obstacle to learning for children and youth with autism spectrum disorder; and

WHEREAS long wait-lists for pediatric assessment and diagnostic service are preventing many children with autism spectrum disorder from receiving needed early diagnosis; and

WHEREAS the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program is currently not available for children after Grade 3; and

WHEREAS applied behavioural analysis has been shown to be effective for many individuals beyond Grade 3; and

WHEREAS there are a lack of supports and services for children and youth with autism spectrum disorder after they age out of the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program; and

WHEREAS it is unacceptable to expect parents in Newfoundland and Labrador to pay thousands of dollars out of their own pockets to cover the costs of private-delivered ABA after Grade 3;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to extend the eligibility for the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program beyond Grade 3 in consultation with parents, advocates,

educators, health care providers, and experts in the autism community.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is the second one of these petitions that we have entered on this side today, and I was very proud, along with many of my fellow caucus colleagues, to stand outside Confederation Building today with parents and family members of children with autism who are being let down by this government for their failure to address the growing epidemic that is autism in this Province.

The numbers have gone from one in eighty-eight, to one in sixty-eight, and we are hearing about 400 people on the wait-list, and people, by the time they are being diagnosed, are aging out of ABA therapy. I talked to many parents out there today, and I would point out that I saw members from the Official Opposition. I did not see anybody from the government side out there today speaking to the parents and family members out there – which I thought was unfortunate – even though they asked for it.

Again, the government can stand up and talk about the investments they have made, but they are still playing catch-up; it is still reactive. We asked questions on this two years ago, and government said, we are putting all this money into it – but it is obviously not doing the job. They need to come to the recognition that this is a serious issue, it is a growing issue, and work with everybody.

When you have parents and advocates outside the Confederation Building on a windy day saying that we cannot get the supports in the school system, we cannot get the supports in the health system, we are not being listened to, then it is time to listen.

We have the highest prevalence in the Country, and this is not going to go away. When you sit down with a parent who is telling you about the fact that they had to wait years for a diagnosis, but the good news is we got the diagnosis; the bad news is we have aged out and we cannot get

the therapy we need and our child is now not talking – not talking because they are not allowed to have the speech therapy; they are not getting the ABA they need. It is not going to go away.

I appreciate the opportunity. It is the first of many.

Thank you.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS most of the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair does not have cellphone coverage; and

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

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies to provide cellphone coverage along the Trans-Labrador Highway and to all communities in coastal Labrador.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, almost every day I am on my feet on a petition in this House and they usually are connected with the rough roads. Last fall it was the medical transportation program, it is the calcium, or something like that. Clearly, you already know we have many issues in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

I think because of the remoteness and because of the terrible roads, all of that increases the need for cellphone coverage in the area. It is a safety issue, Mr. Speaker. Even if government would come out and tell us what the plan is and where they are with cellphone coverage – are they working with service providers right now? What area are they looking at to provide cellphone coverage to next?

I mentioned the last time I was on my feet on this petition one of the things that would help for the interim when you travelling in the remote area is Transportation and Works has certain locations where they have satellite phones around. Every time I have ever gone to get a phone, neither one has been available because that is being very poorly managed, something that simple. Every day they have people coming out of Goose Bay and coming from different ends of the district who could be making sure the satellite phones stock is replenished.

There are people commuting every single day for work. We have teachers moving from town to town in extreme conditions. We are seeing an increase of moose, Mr. Speaker, on the roadways. We have students, groups of school students, who are travelling on buses, ambulances moving along, and mail trucks on terrible, terrible roads in extreme winter conditions.

Mr. Speaker, it is spring on the calendar, but when I drive home each weekend, I am still driving through walls and tunnels of snow, sometimes twenty feet on each side. I share that picture just to try to create a snapshot in your mind of how remote it is, how desperately we need cellphone coverage, and how much it could go. It could go a long way in ensuring the safety of the residents in that area. I will continue to petition for this important thing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This time I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1. It is moved that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Indeed it is always a pleasure to stand in this hon. House to address my colleagues here in the House on the floor, and also to address the great people of my District of Humber West and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

There are days that are more exciting than others here on the floor of the House. We look forward to many days here – we have barbing back and forth and arguing our points of view back and forth from time to time. It is always impressive to stand on the floor of the House and put your points of view across.

One of the days that I always look forward to on this floor of the House since I have been elected is Budget Day. There is always a little bit of more pomp and ceremony on Budget Day, a little bit more suspense and drama, Mr. Speaker, and expectation and anticipation than any of the other days here in the House.

Through the Throne Speech we set out a plan for the year and by extension of that, Mr. Speaker, through our Budget Speech, to lay down the plan for the year for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This Budget Speech this year was positive in many regards, and I want to take some time this afternoon to talk about a few of those. I may not get through them all in the

twenty minutes that I have, but I look forward to another time to stand on my feet to address some of the other positive things that have come out of this particular Budget.

Mr. Speaker, a Budget in the Province is very similar to a budget that we have in our own homes. Each year we sit down and we look at our own budgets. We know how much debt we have coming in, Mr. Speaker. We know what we want to purchase for that particular year, whether we are going to make some new renovations to our home, put new siding on, new windows, or whether we buy a new car, we look at the debt that we have coming in, the debt that we are paying off.

The Province is no different than that. That is exactly what we do when we sit down, when the Cabinet ministers sit down with the Minister of Finance to look at all the monies that is coming in, look at the monies that is going out and we make a plan for the year, Mr. Speaker, and we bring down a Budget. The Budget for this particular year is not to say that we cannot do everything in one particular year because Budgets year after year after year do good for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I was extremely excited – I did not go into the lock-up this year, Mr. Speaker, when the Budget was coming down. I sat out here to listen directly to the Budget, so I did not know what was in the Budget. I listened attentively to what the Minister of Finance was bringing down in her Budget and I listened very closely. Every time I listened to what she had to say, Mr. Speaker, there were all kinds of positive things taking place in the Budget for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I will get a chance to talk about some of these probably the next time I stand up.

I want to talk about the \$110 million contribution we made to the mill in Corner Brook, and post-secondary education, and full-day Kindergarten. I will talk about those. They are all positive things for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will also talk about the tax reductions that took place from this

government over the last number of years and the amount of money that is put back into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I will get a chance to do that this afternoon or the next time I get a chance to get on my feet.

This afternoon I want to spend a few minutes in particular to talk about health care. I want to talk about health care here in the Province, in general terms, but I also want to talk about health care in a more specific term for the West Coast, for my district in particular, the people of Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland. Health care in general in the Province, Mr. Speaker, as you know, nearly \$3 billion of money is allocated this year. Almost 40 per cent, I understand, of our entire Budget gets dedicated to health care.

I do not have all afternoon to go down through some of them, but I want to list four or five of those Budget items reflective of the \$3 billion we are spending in health care. There is \$1.8 million to continue implementing the provincial wait time strategy for hip and knee replacement; \$1.5 million to establish hemodialysis in Bonavista; \$1.2 million to address increased growth of hemodialysis, both in Stephenville and St. John's; and nearly \$750,000 to expand the Medical Transportation Assistance Program which will now increase the monthly cap on accommodations from \$1,500, which was previous, to \$3,000 a month.

The rate for private vehicle use, from sixteen cents to twenty cents a kilometre; change the reimbursement formula to reimburse 75 per cent of eligible expenses over \$3,000 per year; and decrease the private vehicle kilometre threshold from 2,500 kilometres down to 1,500 kilometres. That will assist and help any of those people who need to travel outside of their region into a major centre like St. John's for particular health care needs; \$158,000 to expand the new born screening program to include cystic fibrosis. Again, Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on. I can stand here all afternoon talking about the contributions this government has made to health care in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit this afternoon, for the next fifteen minutes that I have, about more of a personal thing and reflect it to the situation that we talk about with regard to the proposed new hospital in Corner Brook, the health facilities. Mr. Speaker, I spent most of the last four months at the intensive care unit here in the Health Sciences Centre, and the better part of the last six months in some way visiting a family member either at Western Memorial or here at the Health Sciences complex.

I want to say upfront, we have a caring and compassionate, well-trained group of medical professionals, Mr. Speaker, right across this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: They go to work each and every day to make a difference. There is no doubt of that, Mr. Speaker, in my mind. There is incredible work taking place in our health care centres around the clock day in, and day out. I have had a great deal of time over the past six months to sit and reflect about what is happening in health care.

Mr. Speaker, we can view health care and we can view every department in government through a set of lens or different lenses. Some look at health care through an economic lens, the cost of providing services to its people. Others look at health care through a purely scientific or medical lens. I am neither equipped professionally to look at health care either through any of those lenses. I am not trained in economics nor am I trained in medicine, so my point of view will be uninformed.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say and comment on here this afternoon to the people of Humber West, the people of Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland, and indeed all residents of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is that I can look at it from a personal experience that I have experienced over the last six months. Whether that be here at the Health Sciences or at Western Memorial, or the many conversations had with other health professionals that I have

had with people on the mainland, that is the lens I look through. That is the lens by which inform my conversation with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador here this afternoon.

I believe we can look through health care through the economic lens or a purely scientific lens. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we need always to look to health care through how many more years of high-quality life that a patient gains with a particular intervention, a particular tool, or a particular procedure. If we can provide extended quality years to a patient with a particular treatment, a particular procedure, or a particular tool, that is the lens that we always need to look through our health care system.

When I was in education I had twenty-three-and-a-half years as an educator, seventeen or eighteen of those, Mr. Speaker, as a principal and a vice-principal of a high school. I always believed in best quality, up-to-date tools for teachers in the classroom. It was my responsibility as administrator to provide those tools for the teachers in my classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, if I did not provide the tools necessary for them to educate our children, I could not challenge them if something did not happen. If I provided the tools to my educators and something they were supposed to do did not happen, then I had grounds to challenge them. Health care is no different.

That is why this government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars over the past number of years providing service and new services and equipment and tools, I might add, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, to all of the health authorities throughout the Province. Along with that, Mr. Speaker, health foundations, you and I know, the people of the Province know, and volunteers in our health foundations know, they have raised millions of dollars to provide for other tools that are necessary in the Province and in our health care system for doctors and specialists to be able to provide the kinds of necessary services for the people of our Province.

Mr. Speaker, there is an old country song that I know. I know Merle Haggard sang the song, Mr. Speaker, and others probably sang the song as well, and I know they did. The first verse of the song says, "It's a way of mine to say just what I am thinking/ And to do the things I really want to do". Mr. Speaker, that is what I am going to do in the next few minutes with regard to health care and as I discuss it here on the floor of the House. I shall speak to the residents of my district in Humber West, and the residents of Western Newfoundland.

Government has committed to building a health care campus in Corner Brook for the residents of the entire Western Region. Government will deliver on this infrastructure promise like it has delivered on all of the other infrastructure promises this government has made over the last ten or so years in Western Newfoundland, and indeed, in Corner Brook and in my District of Humber West.

Mr. Speaker, long after all of us are gone from this House of Assembly, long after we are gone and we are a part of history, the decisions we make here will follow us and be carried with us for a lifetime long after all of my colleagues on this side of the House and that side of the House are gone. I believe we need to also consider in health care, not only the lenses that I spoke about a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, but as the Premier referenced just a few days ago. We need to look at the psychosocial aspects of health care and the benefits of providing care for patients close to their home so patients can travel back to their place of residence at night after a treatment, or have a family member visit with relative ease to lighten the burden of another family member who has been spending time with their relative who may be sick.

If we did not believe in that principle, Mr. Speaker, we would not have provided the many hundreds of thousands of dollars and the advancements we made and provided for dialysis machines right around the Province that this government has done over the last number of years. That is a principle that we believe in.

Mr. Speaker, over the past six months I have met people at the hospital here in St. John's from every region of the Province. From the Coast of Labrador, from the northern part of Labrador, to the southern part of Labrador, from Stephenville, the Port au Port Peninsula, Port aux Basques, Grand Falls. I speak every day when I am at the hospital, to many, many people who are in there from Corner Brook and the area.

I spoke to people from my hometown of New-Wes-Valley, from Valleyfield and Badger's Quay, Mr. Speaker, who have had relatives in the hospital here in St. John's. Every day I have spoken to many, many people from my District of Humber West. I have seen numerous people come through ICU and I notice one thing, Mr. Speaker. There are many times when some patients who are ICU do not have a family member with them because they live so far away from St. John's. Mr. Speaker, we have had family members with my sick relatives every day for the last six months.

Mr. Speaker, changes in our medical transportation announced this year in this Budget will go a long way in assisting others to be able to travel to other regional centres for their health care, Mr. Speaker. If there is someone at the ICU in the Health Sciences from Corner Brook and he or she had a sister or someone from Plum Point, it is very difficult for that person to leave Plum Point on a Friday afternoon, leave work and to be able to drive to St. John's and be at the Health Sciences Centre to relieve a family member who has been there all week or even for two weeks.

Mr. Speaker, when we have regional health care facilities with the tools necessary to provide the services to the people of the Province like Corner Brook or Stephenville or for that matter, Central, and I am talking specifically about Corner Brook, well then someone can leave a home in Plum Point on a Friday afternoon or after work, visit the hospital in Corner Brook, relieve that family member who has been there all week, and then spend the full weekend with that family member who is sick and get aboard his or her car on Sunday afternoon get back to

Plum Point and be able to go back to work on Monday.

That will be served whether you are from Port aux Basques, Burgeo, Stephenville or anywhere on the Port au Port Peninsula, Grand Falls-Windsor, Central, Gander, you have the time to be able to drive to that particular hospital and get back to work. That is truly, truly important, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is psychosocial care that we talked about and that is the psychosocial care I believe that the Premier was talking about, that deserves weight put on it when we make a decision with regard to health care and, for that matter, when we are making decisions in government on whatever matters.

Mr. Speaker, technology is changing rapidly and now we are able to do things with technology that were unheard of just a few years ago. I support providing the necessary tools in health care, just as I did when I was in education that helps the practitioners in the system do the work that they need to do. That is why that this government in its Blue Book was the only party, I do believe, that mentioned the promise to provide PET services, PET service to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and that is a promise that we are well underway to providing here in St. John's. That procedure is following along its course.

Mr. Speaker, by the time the hospital in Corner Brook or the facility in Corner Brook is ready to provide service to the people of the region, the PET scanner that is now being purchased for the Province here in St. John's will be either obsolete or quite different, or even more advanced with the new technologies that will be on stream. In fact, Mr. Speaker, PET scanner technology has been around since the 1970s and changed so much over the years.

Even last week – yes, last week I say to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador – the US FDA gave clearance for GE Healthcare, a unit of General Electric Company, for the Q.Clear technology that “can provide up to two times improvement in both quantitative accuracy

and image quality in PET/CT imaging.” This is an innovative new tool for clinicians “across the entire care continuum, including diagnosis, staging, treatment planning, and treatment assessment.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that the current PET interactive reconstructive technologies force a compromise between image quality and quantitation. This new technology that was talked about and that I just mentioned and approved last week, shows the advantages of full convergence PET imaging with no more compromise between quantitation and image quality. It is perfect for practitioners in health care.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that I can stand here today and say I support a PET scanner for Corner Brook, but I want to say to the residents of my district, and I want to be very clear, I support the installation of the most up-to-date technology for the hospital in Corner Brook at the time it comes into service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: If that be, Mr. Speaker, the PET scanner with Q.Clear technology or a PET combination MRI combination CT, or PET-CT combination, or a CT-MRI-PET combination, or something totally different, that is what I support. That is what I want for the people of Western Newfoundland and Central Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, I also support the review that the Premier has talked about in the House that will take place regarding radiation services for the rest of Newfoundland, monies for which have been provided in this year's Budget. I support the work of the hard-working individuals in the Department of Health and the advice and direction that they give to the minister and the Parliamentary Secretary who sits next to me here in this hon. House. I also support the monies that were approved in the Budget to look at radiation services both on the West Coast and indeed in the entire Province.

Mr. Speaker, like many others I too have spent the last number of months looking at models of radiation operational services throughout Canada and in other jurisdictions. I looked at what is happening in Nova Scotia and, in particular, in Sydney and Prince Edward Island, and other places throughout the country and services that are provided outside the country.

There are a number of radiation service models and they have been discussed here on the floor of the House, Mr. Speaker. I want to say and I want to be clear that if there is no model out there that can be mirrored to fit the radiation needs of Western Newfoundland, I ask that we create a home-grown model such that families needing radiation care can get the necessary services as close to their homes, Mr. Speaker, in Central and Western Newfoundland as possible.

If we look at it through these lenses, Mr. Speaker, all of us can make it happen. To my Twitter friends and Twitter followers, and to the people of Western Newfoundland and indeed the entire Province, I believe we can do it together. I have now stated where I stand with regard to the hospital and the services we can provide and need to provide for the people of Western Newfoundland, not only in Corner Brook at the regional hospital, but for all stakeholders in every part of the Province. Again, I want to be very clear about where I stood on those two particular issues and I think this afternoon I have made it very clear for the listening audience and also for the people here on the floor of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I said I had a number of other things to say and I am down to about a minute and fifty seconds, but I will take the minute or two I have left to talk about how important the mill is to Corner Brook. It was a \$110 million announcement in the Budget and it was something that, as Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources, I had the opportunity to work with the last three Natural Resources Ministers as this deal was being worked on.

I am proud to be from Humber West and proud to represent the people of Humber West, and I was extremely proud to work with the former

Premier, the current Premier, and the three former and current Minister of Natural Resources over the last sixteen, seventeen, or twenty months as we worked diligently, Mr. Speaker. We worked with the mill workers, we worked with the unions, we worked with the company, and we worked with Cabinet ministers to stand up for the people who work in the forest industry of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are 5,500 jobs directly or indirectly affected by the forest industry of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. We stood strong with the union leadership. This government stood strong with the union membership, this government stood strong with current and retired workers, and this government stood strong with company officials to deliver again a promise we made to work with the company, work the people, and work with the residents to deliver for the people of Western Newfoundland and indeed for all residents of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, yes, there is a lot of work left to be done in the forest industry, as we all know. There are lots of technology and lots of changes happening within the forest industry. Do you know what? The forest industry is a cog in the wheel of the economic engine that drives rural parts of this Province. I was proud to stand for those seventeen or eighteen months in Natural Resources to work with the ministers and work with everyone else to deliver that deal with Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. When I speak to the people in my district, they are extremely proud that we did so.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a privilege for me to stand here in my place today and offer some comment on the 2014 Budget. I will have three opportunities to have something to say about it. I have a variety of comments to make about the good things

government has done and also the problems, the areas we need to address.

First of all, I want to recognize our leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Humber Valley, for his strong consistence in stable leadership. He is setting a standard that is easy for members of the House of Assembly to follow. That is the feedback I am hearing from my constituents when I am out in my district talking to people attending events, as I did all weekend.

I had quite an interesting weekend last weekend. There are a lot Easter events around my district with seniors and people who live in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, people with young children, people with children with special education needs, and people who are attentive to the discussion that is going on here from one day to the next in the House of Assembly.

People appreciate the consistent message they are seeing from our leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition. A message about more opportunities for young people and issues that are important to the majority of my constituents, and I would hazard a guess, most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Opening up our economy, diversifying our economy, growing new industries, creating new jobs in a competitive economy, an economy that can be one of the most competitive in our region of Canada, in Atlantic Canada.

Also, taking care of our seniors, the people who built Newfoundland and Labrador, those who built our communities, those who raised and taught our children, who took care of our sick, who broke new ground in business in the private sector, paved our roads, kept the lights on and did all of those things that we sometimes take for granted. We have to be there for our seniors, as they have been there for us over the years.

Empty promises will not do. People are tired of empty promises. Seniors will remember the empty promises that were made by this government. In particular, when we had the Budget delivered this year, I could not believe

that we have yet to hear anything further on the government's \$100 million strategy it committed for seniors back in the midst of the last general election.

People who are watching at home – and I would hazard a guess that there are a few seniors who are watching the broadcast from the House of Assembly today – will remember that in early October of 2011 the former Premier, who has since vacated the post, promised nearly \$100 million of new money for a senior strategy while she was campaigning in the general election.

That strategy was supposed to include new measures for long-term care that had not been announced at that point, community support services as well, access to quality service was mentioned, services to meet seniors' needs in the best way possible. That was supposed to be over four years. As I said, new funding of nearly \$100 million for seniors.

They talked about the implementation of something they called the Close to Home strategy. Those were supposed to be measures that promote health and wellness, focusing on person-centred service. I have not heard anything about that since the general election, certainly not in that language.

They were going to overhaul the home care assessment test that was promised. There was supposed to be an increase in the amount of money that seniors could have in their savings account when accessing home care. That was supposed to be from \$10,000 increased to \$50,000. There were supposed to be a number of pilot project as well.

As part of that \$100 million senior strategy, the government promised to commission a collective memory project that would invite seniors to record and archive their important stories, their recollections of their youth, their work and their social activities in Newfoundland and Labrador over the years. That was all supposed to be done in co-operation with our post-secondary institutions, notably Memorial University of Newfoundland, and I have not heard a word about that. I do not know what

happened but that is one of the things I think we will continue to hold government to account on, the absence of any action on the promised \$100 million senior strategy that was trotted out in the midst of the last general election. I wanted to mention that.

In addition, another group in Newfoundland and Labrador, and especially in light of the demonstration in front of the Confederation Building today that I note was not attended by any of the members of the government side, although they were invited. I know there were a couple of people, a delegation, who came in to try and locate a minister of the Crown, a Parliamentary Assistant, or any government member to go out and bring greetings, and chat with the people from the organization called FEAT, which is an autism advocacy organization in Newfoundland and Labrador. No one came out, although members of the Opposition were there in great number.

Another group that is often underserved, overlooked, and underserved continues to be children and students with special needs. In my role as the Official Opposition critic for the Department of Education, of course, it is my role to discuss their challenges in the education system. Certainly, they have challenges across all of the services delivered by government. As I said, there was a protest in front of the Confederation Building today just related to one group. I will talk a little bit about that later.

Parents are very concerned about the level of support and services available to children with autism spectrum disorder, to students with autism spectrum disorder, but also adults with autism spectrum disorder. It is a disorder that is too often misunderstood and, as I said, people are too often underserved and overlooked.

I had the great pleasure to attend a Federation of School Councils meeting out in Grand Falls-Windsor a while back, a couple of weeks ago. I know the Minister of Education was unable to attend because he had a previous commitment and had previously advised the group he was unable to attend this year, though I have seen

him speak at that meeting in the past. I wish he had been there this year.

There was one person who spoke, gave a speech, and addressed the assembly there about the difference – and I think this is an important distinction we all have to come to realize sooner or later because kids are counting on us – between inclusion, including people, and inclusive education. There is a distinction. That person said it is not enough just to have students there in the classroom; their presence does not provide for inclusion. That makes a lot of sense.

I think there is a saying that says: Showing up is half the battle. Indeed, showing up is half the battle, but there is another half that needs to be dealt with. That makes a lot of sense in the context of inclusive education in schools and the difference between having students included and providing for inclusive education, because if we are going to have true inclusive education, that is the agenda, there are a few clear steps that need to be made.

I just want to relate another story. The day I was driving across the Island to go to Grand Falls-Windsor and attend the Federation of School Councils meeting, I called up a friend of mine who is a teacher. That person was done their work for the day and I was just trying to catch up with them on the Bluetooth. I was driving along and chatting. We talked about the whole idea of differentiated instruction. That is providing a different type, a level, a different education service, if you will, by trying to meet the needs of a variety of different students all in the same classroom. Because that is the reality we are dealing with today.

This person was saying they had a child with an obsessive compulsive disorder, a number of children with autism spectrum disorder, a child who spends a significant amount of time in the Janeway Hospital because of an anxiety disorder, a child with oppositional defiant disorder, which is a behavioural issue, a child with a mobility issue, and a number of children with diagnosed and as yet undiagnosed auditory processing disorders. Trying to deliver education to all of those children, plus the rest of

their peers who are not diagnosed with or have not been found to have any particular special education need. So it is a significant challenge.

As the Member for Burgeo – La Poile said today, we are one of the few provinces in Canada that does not have something called teacher assistants. I noticed there was a member across the way who was saying it is semantics because we have student assistants. Well, it is not semantics because it is not the same thing.

Student assistants in our schools assist students with a very narrow grouping of activities, eating, hygiene, safety, portering and going to the washroom. That is pretty well what they are expected to do, by and large. Some of them go well beyond that, though it is not expected of them. Sometimes people do not have the necessary training, though they are well meaning.

That is why other provinces have something called teacher assistants. These are people who have instruction in pedagogy, in the delivery of education, how to help somebody prepare for a test, how to help somebody during a practical assignment, like a laboratory, who has a disability. They are trained to assist people with different types of disabilities.

At some community colleges in Canada there are actually courses you can do, a year or two or longer in programs. I have seen one called autism assistant, so helping children with autism. I would assume that involves instruction in providing applied behavioural analysis.

There is another one I saw at a community college in British Columbia called special education assistant. Again, somebody who is able to assist children with special education needs in the classroom. They have some instruction in pedagogy, much like teachers do. That is different than what is expected for a student assistant. I think that is really an important thing to mention if we are really talking about genuine inclusion in schools.

I do not know if the Minister of Education had an opportunity to read my letter to the editor of

The Telegram newspaper last Saturday – I believe it was last Saturday or the Saturday before – where I talked about some of the things we need to do. These are things that the Federation of School Councils, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, and a variety of other advocates in education, in special education have talked about over the past period of time, increasing the numbers of instructional resource teachers in classrooms. Those are special education teachers. Increasing the numbers of guidance counsellors in schools to help remove or reduce, or eliminate the backlog for in-school assessments for children with special education needs.

We know guidance officials perform a variety of different roles in schools. We know they are involved in issues of a personal nature, with career planning. So helping young people figure out what they are going to do after they graduate. They are involved with comprehensive student assessments. That is where we see where we have a shortage of guidance officials, of guidance counsellors, educational psychologists. We have a backlog then of children, of students needing assessment.

They also provide counselling when it comes to scholarship and the post-secondary education application process, procedures, information, drug and alcohol awareness, personal counselling. They are involved in anti-bullying initiatives. They are involved in a variety of different mediation initiatives as well when it comes to trying to either troubleshoot conflict between students, or between staff and students, parents, staff, students; all the various relationships that you have within the school community.

The current allocation is one guidance counsellor for 500 students. That causes a fairly significant problem when it comes to rural schools because there is often a number of schools in rural areas that only have the one guidance counsellor who provides services on an almost or virtual itinerant basis, which really leads to a differential level of support, a different level of support for students, for children in rural

areas versus those in urban areas. I have said in Question Period; I have asked the minister about changing that current ratio.

I went back over a number of historical documents relating to the numbers of guidance counsellors in schools. At one point the NLTA was talking to government and asking for the ratio to be cut by half. One guidance counsellor or educational psychologist per 250 students. The Federation of School Councils has asked for that ratio to be changed to one per 333 students. I would be happy to see either one of those because that would be movement in the direction that we need to see government moving in.

Back in 2008, in response to the Teacher Allocation Commission, the minister at the time said the recommendations regarding guidance services in schools required further research and analysis. The responsibilities and the workload of guidance counsellors would be reviewed as part of the government's response to the ISSP & Pathways Commission and other initiatives that were in play being implemented and reviewed at the time.

That was a while ago now. We are talking six years ago that the minister at the time, who is no longer the minister, suggested that all of this was under review, yet we have seen little movement. We know that issues related to violence in schools, bullying in schools, drug use, sorts of anti-social behaviour, special education needs, assistance with career planning and post-secondary education planning, all of that is far underserved.

There is another area – and I am not sure I have a whole lot of time to get into it at the moment – the whole question of services for children who require attention from a teacher who knows about teaching English as a second language.

I was in one of my schools in my district recently in Leary's Brook Junior High and there was a soccer ball that was fashioned by a child who was a student who had spent some time in a refugee camp in Africa. He replicated the ball that they used to play with in this refugee camp. The ball was made out of torn up t-shirts and

plastic bags, and this is something that they played with while they were waiting to be saved from the desperate circumstances that they found themselves in in an impoverished African country.

It says a lot about the people who are coming here today. They are from very diverse backgrounds, from all over the world, and a lot of those individuals are underserved as well. I guess the next time I have a chance to talk we could talk about this in the context of the government's purported Population Growth Strategy. Because I think the provision of English as second language services really comes into play when we are thinking about the need to have more immigrants to Newfoundland and Labrador who are coming to Canada –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I will have more time to speak about that later.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is a privilege to get up here again today and to speak for my residents of Cape St. Francis, which I consider the most beautiful district in the Province – great people, great towns, and great people to represent. I feel great pride in doing that.

Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about the Budget and I want to talk about the fishery. Now, you might say a fellow from down in Flatrock might not know a lot about the fishery, but we do. I grew up in a fishing home. I looked at the news last night and I was watching the seal hunt start. I have had conversations with my friend for Baie Verte – Springdale

about the seal hunt and all the small boats and everything that go up to the seal hunt. I was actually watching it on the news last night. It was pretty amazing when you look at those small boats going through the ice to go up and get the seals. I am so glad that the seal fishery is continued in Newfoundland. I am so glad that we keep it going.

Also, a big thing that I noticed last night, I know they interviewed a gentleman from Vogue Furriers and he talked about the increase in sales here in Newfoundland. That is excellent to see, that we are supporting the seal hunt here. I see people coming in with the boots on in the House of Assembly. That is a new thing lately, the seal skin boots. There are a few guys here I noticed with the seal skin hats. My colleague for Bonavista South, I saw a seal skin coat on him. So it is great that we are supporting the seal hunt because it is very important.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important for me for a different reason. It is very important for me because my father went to the seal hunt, and I always liked the stories that he told. He was a great hand to tell stories; he could always tell a great story about the seal hunt. He always told me this story and that story, but he was telling me one day about this gentlemen Mr. Pin Kavanagh and how he went over the side of the boat, and a big hood seal or harp seal came up behind him, and only for the captain shot at it, he figured the seal was going to get him.

I was down to Pouch Cove on one of my first functions and I met up with Mr. Harrison Hudson and he told me when I went over, he said, I went to the seal hunt with your father. He said: Did he ever tell you about Pin Kavanagh? So I knew that the story was true then when he told me.

This week – I am not allowed to show this – but there are the two Mr. Hudsons from Pouch Cove. In the local paper this week was the one-hundredth anniversary of the seal hunt disaster and they had both of them down to the Lions Club in Pouch Cove and they told a story about how one Mr. Hudson, Harrison, fell through the ice and Herb got him with the gaff and saved his

life. That was back, I do not know how many years ago since these fellows – both of them are elderly men now. It was such a nice story. It is nice to see people talk about the seal hunt and it is so nice, like I said, that the hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale talks about the seal hunt and how important it is to his area of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk a little bit about the fishery today. The fishery is very important to me. My son fishes, and my brother is a fisherman. They left early Sunday morning – he came in through the house last night; 2:00 o'clock this morning they went out, off Fermeuse. They went out for I do not know how long at the crab. They put their pots out, they stay overnight, they haul them back again and then they come on in.

For this time for year in Newfoundland and Labrador the fishery is alive. It is amazing how many people are involved in the fishery. It is not the fishery that we once knew. It is not the fishery of the cod fishery where people were just coming with the cod traps and they were catching it. Our fishermen are going further offshore. They have more technology than ever before. They call up the Gander Weather Office, they will give the co-ordinates of where they are going and they will find out what the weather is for the next couple of days. They have the latest technology. You get on some of these boats now, you have to be a scientist or have your degree in something just to run the most of the gadgets that are there.

The crab fishery in my area down my way is huge. It is unbelievable how much money that takes in the crab fishery. Granted, there was not as much hustle and bustle as what the cod fishery is. The crab fishery, our fishermen are doing really well, they are making really good wages. It is a great fishery to see that.

The fishery is alive and well. I understand the Minister of Fisheries saying it is a \$1 billion industry. I can see why, because we diversified from the cod to that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the cod fishery. My father was a Member of the House of Assembly. I always talk about my father, I do not know why, but I always do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: He was a Member of the House of Assembly. If you asked him while he was a Member of the House of Assembly what he did – in his life he was a fireman, he was a policeman, he was a mayor, and he was on the school board. He did all these things. The one thing that he did that was made more important than anything else was that he was a fisherman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: If you asked him what his number one job was he would tell you it was a fisherman. Mr. Speaker, I was driving home I think it was last Friday listening to On Point Radio and I was disgusted. I really was disgusted. My father was a fisherman and was a Member of the House of Assembly. He was very proud to be a Member of the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: He was also very proud to be a fisherman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: When I heard the hon. Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and I am going to forgive her, they were having a little argument between – not an argument, a discussion I suppose – the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island and they were talking about the by-election. The hon. Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair said we ran a fisherman out there against a big Cabinet minister and everything else. I would like to know: Would she say the same thing if it was a doctor, or a lawyer?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) fisherman.

MR. K. PARSONS: Only a fisherman.

AN HON. MEMBER: A lowly fisherman.

MR. K. PARSONS: A lowly fisherman. Come on, seriously. I hope she did apologize to the hon. member. I hoped she apologized.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, on a point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: I think the member opposite is misconstruing the words. Certainly she never said anything about it being low. You can ask the Member for Terra Nova who I think recognized that and acknowledged that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, you are correct; I think she just said a fisherman. It was the tone that she used and it was the context that she said it. I apologize to her for that, I do.

Mr. Speaker, the whole point – and it could be a slip of the tongue, I agree. I know that lady is a very respectful lady and I do not think she would downgrade fishermen like that. I hope she did apologize to the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace. I felt myself with my father being a politician and a fisherman, honestly it really made me feel bad. He was as good as anything in this House of Assembly and I know the hon. Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace. I was out campaigning against him and I knocked on doors. People spoke highly of how great he was a mayor and spoke highly of how great he was as a volunteer. I am sure a fisherman, a teacher, a doctor, a lawyer, or whatever it is, is just as fine a profession to be in here in the House.

I have no letters behind my name. Some do, some do not, but we all represent the people.

That is why we are here. When she said that, it really upset me. I wanted to make a point here today that whether you are a fisherman, a doctor, or a lawyer, everybody has a right to serve in this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I think it brings a lot to the House of Assembly that we have such diverse people here, that people have a different opinion. Young, old, whatever we do, it is very important we bring that to the House of Assembly.

My father had a song, and I am not a hand to sing or anything like that, but it was a Dick Nolan song.

AN HON. MEMBER: Sing it!

MR. K. PARSONS: No, I am not going to sing it to you, but it was *Fisherman's Boy*. It was his favourite song. One verse in it went:

“You doctors, you lawyers, you teachers you can,
Go seek out your fortunes across great land;
But wherever you go, lads, hold your heads high,
And always be proud you're a fisherman's boy.”

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I have my head held high here today because I am a fisherman's boy. I hope the hon. member does the right thing and apologizes to the members and corrects her statement because I know she could not have meant that. I would say everyone here in the House have people with fishermen in the area and have people.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just continue now with talking a little bit about the Budget. When I look at the Budget, I look at economic growth and I look at where we are today and where we have come from over the years. It would have been so easy for us this year to look at a Budget

and say: No, we cannot have any extra spending; we have to keep it level; we have to have a surplus; and no, we cannot spend our money. This year we are going to have a little bit of a deficit, and I am glad we are because we are spending money on important things.

When everybody looks at the Budget, they look at a big pie and everybody gets a slice of that pie, Mr. Speaker. We have health care, we have education, we have transportation, we have social needs, and we have salaries and income to pay for people who are doing the fantastic job they do for Newfoundland and Labrador. So we are going to run a little deficit this year; next year, hopefully, we are going to have a surplus.

Mr. Speaker, just look at what is happening in our history. In our history, we have more people working today than ever before. We have this year a record high of 232,800 people working in our Province. I see it in my district every day. There are young people with great jobs – great jobs – and nice, beautiful homes, and being able to afford these homes because of the opportunities that are right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is all over Newfoundland. It is not just down in my district, it is all over the Province. Everywhere we go you see people and growth.

My friend here from Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, she tells me about the new housing starts and the different developments down in her area and how people are doing so well. I know that people all over the Province – the Member for Grand Bank, I have been out a couple of times to his place and to see the growth out there. It is fantastic, and he is a great member. Do you know what? It is all over the Province that you see this growth.

Mr. Speaker, just look at our unemployment rate. Our unemployment rate is 11.4 per cent, the lowest since 1973. We hear day after day over on the other side of the House of Assembly: Listen here, there is nothing changing, nothing changing. Well the unemployment rate has changed. The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been since 1973, and we are very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Household income is up to \$22 billion. That gives people more money to spend. More money to spend on their children, more money to spend on their homes, more money to spend all over the place, Mr. Speaker. That is a great thing because when people spend money our economy is working and doing great.

This one really amazed me, Mr. Speaker, is the earnings per family. Our average earnings per household right now is \$951 a week. The second highest among all of Canada. Mr. Speaker, we were never in this ballpark before. We were always down in the lower end, the seventh, eighth or ninth. Now we are second among all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, retail sales tax. I am going to give a plug for my buddy, okay? I have a friend of mine who sells cars in at Cabot Ford. A great fellow to buy a car from. I know a couple of my hon. members went in and bought one off him. Steve Grace is his name. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, he tells me he has never seen business like it before. Last year was the best year they had. Apparently, according to this, it must have been the best year for all car sales. That is a great indicator of how the economy is working. When people are out spending money we know we have a great economy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on now and talk about some of the things we are doing for our seniors, people on low income. Our personal tax rate is the lowest in Atlantic Canada. Again, that is another great indicator of how we are doing in this Province. I would like to have a magic wand and everybody would be perfect but we do not have it. We can do things like reduce taxes, put more money in people's hands, and give them a great education, the best health care that we can provide. These are all indicators of how the economy is doing and it is all indicators of how people are doing in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, look at eliminating personal income tax; to an individual at \$18,547 and families up to \$31,362. That is another great indicator. We are helping people who need help the most. People on low income and our seniors.

I look at some of the work that was done in my district with seniors, mainly seniors. It can be done for anybody, but it is the Home Repair Program and the REEP program. There are so many people in my district who take advantage of it. I go to senior functions all the time and I explain to them that there are these programs where we can help if you need some renovations in your home, or if you feel your home needs a little upgrade because it is probably cold during the winter, and we just went through one of the hardest winters we ever had. These programs are helping the people who need it the most. That is very important.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the other thing that really impressed me in this year's Budget, it is small business. Now, when you come from communities like Torbay, Flat Rock, Pouch Cove, Bauline, and all this, there are a lot of small businesses out in Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove. There are lot of small businesses there. Every time we give them a break, Mr. Speaker, it may help them employ somebody locally in the area. It may make them drop the prices – I do not think so, but it may, you never know.

It creates employment. It creates a little bit of energy in your communities. When we dropped the business tax from 4 per cent to 3 per cent, that was a great move, Mr. Speaker. That was an outstanding move.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Do you know what? They are the people who keep our economy going, especially in rural Newfoundland. All over the place really, but small businesses are very, very important.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about our health care system. We all have issues when it comes to health care. The biggest thing in your life is if you have your health people will say you have everything. We can never invest enough money in the health care system because it is something that everybody, once a loved one is sick it really hits home. I know there are members in here with loved ones who are really

sick, but when it hits your family you want the best possible care – and we are, Mr. Speaker.

I look at the pie that government has to spend its money on every year, and you look at what comes out of that pie for health care, \$3 billion. Almost 40 per cent of our total expenditure goes to health care. Mr. Speaker, so it should, because there is nothing more important than your health. There is nothing more important than a loved one getting the best quality health care that they can have.

Right now, if you look in Newfoundland and Labrador, all you have to look at is the number of nurses. Never before have we had more nurses in our system. Never before have we had more doctors in our system. Mr. Speaker, we are investing in health care, we are investing in things like education, and it is very important that we do.

Mr. Speaker, I am getting down there now, but I want to talk a little bit about education because there are a lot of things happening. This Budget, to me, was more or less an education budget. It was a Budget that really addressed the needs in education.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Minister of Education because he is a great minister, but he is also a very fine gentleman. I am a very good judge of character. When I judge a character of a man, I can honestly say that the Minister of Education is a fine gentleman. It is an absolute pleasure to have him here on this side of the House, I can honestly say that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I dare say I will get that new school started pretty quickly. I just want to talk a little bit about what we are doing in education.

I asked the Member for Exploits, he was talking about all the maintenance that was done on the schools in the Province. He said you can get a list of what maintenance is done and, Mr. Speaker, anyone can get it. There are six pages

on this of what we are doing in the schools. Not only have we built thirteen new schools and we have nine new schools in the process, just look at what we are doing with the schools that we have there.

Our children have never, never had the opportunities that we are giving to them today – never before. The technologies in the classroom today, I have never seen before. Mr. Speaker, we are improving everything. We are improving electrical systems, new windows, new doors, whatever needs to be done to ensure children get the best education in this Province, we are doing it. Education is another part of that pie. Health care gets a share and education. The two biggest parts of our Budget are health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, I know opposite members across the way will talk about schools here and schools there. I can tell you about the schools down in my district. Right now in this year's Budget in Torbay we have the site selection done, we have the planning done, so it will be under construction soon and there will be a new middle school in Torbay. What that is going to do is take care of all the communities in the area basically because Torbay Elementary will go K-4, Cape St. Francis Elementary will go K-4 and Grade 7 will come out of the high school.

There is no doubt about it, Mr. Speaker; we have a problem down there. I know some of the hon. members across the way mentioned about schools being too small, but nobody ever knew that we were going to experience the growth that we did in the last number of years. In the Towns of Torbay, Flatrock, Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, Bauline, and Pouch Cove we have experienced 20 percent growth in the last four to five years.

A school that was built in 1995 in Pouch Cove was built for a declining population. It is unbelievable. The population of Flatrock at the time, one of the communities there, was about 1,000. Today it is over 1,400, almost 1,500 people. The growth has just gone crazy. Mr. Speaker, we have a solution for the area, and we have the solution for the children in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a minute left but I want to talk a little bit about I was fortunate enough to go down to Pouch Cove with the hon. Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs and we did an announcement. We did an announcement for the Town of Pouch Cove. Every year, you try to make sure there is some money you know you have available and you try to talk to the towns. Everybody comes in with a wish list. The Town of Torbay came in looking for, I think, about \$25 million; Flatrock had a new this and a new that, roadwork, and everything else.

I went to the towns and I explained to them. I said: Do you know what? The biggest issue in our area is probably the water in the Town of Pouch Cove. We definitely have to be able to start something and get started with that. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? They all agreed; the towns and the mayors all agreed.

The day we did the announcement in Pouch Cove I was very proud that all the mayors in the area, from Bauline, Flatrock, Torbay, and Logy Bay-Middle Cove, came down. They knew that Pouch Cove got most of the municipal capital works this year, but they came down to support the Town of Pouch Cove. I thought that was fantastic. They all had their needs, but when we look at the priorities and what the priority should have gone to, we have to have clean drinking water. That is definitely a priority.

I was very proud to be part of that announcement. I thank the minister for the announcement. It was a fantastic announcement for the area. Mr. Speaker, I am just very proud to be here today and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, am proud to be here to represent the District of Bay of Islands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the chirping has started already. It is just amazing. When I want to stand up and talk about something as important as the hospital, chirping starts already. I ask them just to listen because this is a very important issue, I say to the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, in the District of Bay of Islands and all of Western Newfoundland there are some major issues and the hospital is one. People know I have been on that now for almost three years. I have been very vocal. I have been very persistent. Today I am half pleased. I am not totally pleased; I am half pleased. I will go through that.

There are some conditions in the Bay of Islands on the roads, Mr. Speaker, that are a major concern. There has been very little, if any, road improvements in the last five or six years. Water and sewer is another major thing. I am going to meet with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. There is no capital project.

Mr. Speaker, what is insulting to me, and I do not know what anybody else thinks, the people in Bay of Islands are taxpayers and residents, but here we heard the minister out announcing money up in his district, which I am proud of, and here is the minister out today delivering tenders already awarded for water and roads, and we cannot even get anything for the Liberal districts. There is something –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune is there laughing. That is something to laugh at, people driving on unsafe roads. That is something to laugh at. That is a big joke, that is, people driving on dangerous roads and no water. That is a joke – an absolute joke, Mr. Speaker.

That is what we have to do. If you are going to treat everybody, treat everybody properly. If you are going to do it, do it all, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak about the hospital for a few minutes. I heard the Member for Humber West today, but now we have to go through the words of the Member for Humber West when he said – and the Member for Humber West is here, if anything I am saying is wrong I ask you to stand up and clarify it because I definitely do not want to say something that I did not hear correctly – that he supports the PET scanner in the new hospital. Now, that is what I heard and I am sure the member said that by the time the hospital is built that he supports, with the new changes in technology, whatever is best available for a PET scanner for the new regional hospital. That is what I heard.

Mr. Speaker, I have to go through something, because I have been saying that PET scanner radiation unit – and I assume the Member for Humber West agrees with what I just said. When the Leader of the Opposition and myself went to a public meeting – and no government members there – out in Corner Brook, the action committee, which I have to give a lot of credit to, who raised the bar on this also: Israel Hann, Gerald Parsons, Wayne Rose, the rest of the guys and the ladies, I just want to thank them also for bringing this issue.

Mr. Speaker, when the leader and myself went out and made that announcement, which we thought was the right thing, and the Member for Humber West now today agrees, here is what we were told: The Minister of Health said a Liberal commitment to put a PET scanner in the Corner Brook new hospital is very much a political decision. Now, I ask the Member for Humber West, and I ask this very seriously because to get this done, we are going to need the support from everybody. What you said today, is it a political decision or is it because it is the right decision? I ask the member if he wants he can stand up now on a point of order, take my time, and say it is because it is the right decision. When we made that decision two months ago, and I am very serious here, we were told we

were political opportunists – political opportunists. That it should not be done; there is no need for it out there on the West Coast. There is no need.

We were vilified here in this House. We were vilified in the media and now, with a public meeting coming up next Thursday, the Member for Humber West – which I look forward to your support. I look forward to it. Do not get me wrong one bit; but when the Minister of Health is out making these statements, I ask: Is she saying that you are making a political statement, that it is only politics here?

Here is an opportunity. Do you agree with the minister, or do you agree with the people in Humber West, Mr. Speaker? Here is an opportunity. Because if you agree with the minister, if you do not stand up and say this is not a political decision, this is the right decision, then all of a sudden I guess you are playing politics too, according to the Minister of Health.

I think it is absolutely shameful that now we have government – and, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Humber West happens to be the adjoining district with the Bay of Islands. That is why I always ask for his support on this here. That is why we need to stand shoulder to shoulder. If there Minister of Health is out condemning me that means she is condemning the Member for Humber West.

Just to the people who are listening – when you get a position of parliamentary assistant, which he is of Natural Resources, he is speaking on behalf of government. So the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources is now speaking on behalf of government saying that we should put a PET scanner in Corner Brook.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is a big change – that is a big change. I am proud just for the first baby step. When he comes out and he either publicly or privately says to the Minister of Health it is not politics, I am doing it because it the right reason, I would have more confidence in what was said today. Mr. Speaker, I was vilified

when I was out and made that decision – I was vilified.

Mr. Speaker, here is the other thing that was said: Radiation treatment ought to be offered in a tertiary care centre where the provincial cancer program is offered. That is the primary reason to have it in St. John's. Do you know who said that? It was the Minister of Health.

So I ask again, the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources who is speaking on behalf of the government: Do you agree with that statement now? Here is an opportunity. Take my time. Because if I can get that member on side, that is a giant step. That is a giant step to getting what is needed in Western Newfoundland, for Labrador, and Western Newfoundland. Here is an opportunity – and Central, all Western Newfoundland, Gander, west, or wherever is the first option for anybody who needs radiation.

So I say to the Member for Humber West, obviously you are speaking on behalf of government, obviously it is the time now to stand up and say these statements made from the minister by the myself and the Leader of the Opposition, stood up in front of 200 people, we got vilified. We are political opportunists, it is nothing but political, yet now, quietly, he supports it.

We need to stand together. If it happens to take on – I did it before. I took on my own government before back in 2003, Mr. Speaker, when I stood up for a major issue. It is not a big deal. If you feel very confident that that is what you need to do, Mr. Speaker, do it. When I get vilified from here on in, when the Premier who happens to be the Member for Humber East and the Minister of Health now stands up and says the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for the Bay of Islands is playing politics, I am going to say include the Member for Humber West because he said it today that he supports a PET scanner.

Mr. Speaker, if you are going to go and make a major statement, let's go all the way. That is what we said before. Again I say to the Member

for Humber West, anything I say that is not accurate, I ask you to please stand up on the point of order to correct me. What the member said is that he would look for radiation across Canada. He named some places like PEI, and he named some places like Sydney. He said we will look around, and if we cannot find an option for Corner Brook we will have our own home-grown option. That is what the Member for Humber West said. He is going through his notes there but that is what he said because I marked it down.

Mr. Speaker, do you know the frustrating part about that? I have been giving the Member for Humber East, who is the Premier now, that information for two years. I have been talking about the places in Ontario; Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury with the satellite station up there, now they are putting a corridor up through Alberta. I have been giving him that information for two years. Two years I have been saying here are the places that are already being done.

The options are already there, I say to the Member for Humber West. You do not have to find a home-grown one. They are already there.

I will just give an example and I will go through this a bit later, Mr. Speaker. I will give it to the Member for Humber West. I spoke to the group in teleconference from Peterborough – and this is a major issue and I am going through why it is. They added a single unit in Peterborough after the hospital was built. What we were told on a teleconference is that it is a major problem. The problem is that the extension that is on the hospital for the bunker is out in the parking lot. There is no patient flow. There is no way to use the services that are already in the hospital, like any specialty in the chemo unit or any support staff. That is the problem if we do not have it now.

Mr. Speaker, even the PC leadership candidate after meeting with the action committee said he does not support a PET scanner. I say to the Member for Humber West let's stand up and say we need it now; we have to have it now. I can

always say, and I said in this House on many occasions, actions are louder than words.

It is easier for the Member for Humber West – listen, I really need your support on this. I know for two years you have been coming dragging your heels.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. JOYCE: Okay, Mr. Speaker, I guess we will have to talk about that later because if I mention two ministers, is that fine? Because the Member for Humber West –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. JOYCE: Okay, not a problem.

Mr. Speaker, will you ask the Member for Humber West will he stand with me now and the Leader the Opposition and the Opposition here not just say we are going to put a PET scanner in, not just say we are going to put a radiation unit, but demand that the design be changed so that they can, right now, accommodate it? It is easy to say that we are going to do this. I will give you an example of why we need to say that, Mr. Speaker.

Part of the PET scanner, when the Minister of Health got up and said oh, a PET scanner costs \$40 million, it is too expensive to put in Corner Brook – too expensive to put in Corner Brook. Under the Freedom of Information, Mr. Speaker, do you know what the cost was? It was not for a PET scanner, as was said in this House; \$30 million of it was for renovations to accommodate the PET scanner. That is why we need the design.

So if the Member for Humber West wants now to stand up and stand by the words and really mean what he said for the residents of Newfoundland, it is time to come, stand up to

the government and say put in that design because I can assure right now it is not in the design. The Minister of Health said on numerous occasions, Mr. Speaker, it is not a justification on the machine – not justification therefore it is not in the design. So it is time for the Member for Humber West to go to the next step and show that he is really committed to it and stand with us.

Now we have to get the Premier; the Premier is the next one, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Humber West finally came onside, now we need the Premier because it is such a big issue and it is not going away. The action committee is not going to let it drop, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the design is a big part of it because with the design we need the traffic flow, we need the patient flow, and we need the support staff. That is why we need it. We need to have all of this into it.

I know, Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier, of all the work I had, was the only person in the government opposite who said what was actually happening. It was in Estimates and I asked him. He was the Minister of Transportation and Works at the time. I asked the minister: Where is the hospital? He said: It is in the predesign. I said: It was announced that construction was going to start. No, he said, it is in the predesign. That was after I got elected in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, everything else you had to drag out by the heels. We heard the minister, we heard the Premier: No, we do not have the numbers. To me it is astounding how you can put out numbers, it is astounding how you can go out and say everything is so political, yet now with a public meeting coming up – and I congratulate the member. We just needed to go to the next step.

As I mentioned just a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, the PET scanner in St. John's is \$30 million – just for the PET scanner for renovations. That is it.

MR. LANE: What about the other members? Do they support it?

MR. JOYCE: The other members, I do not think. I am not sure what the other members from Bay St. George say because they have not said a word. I can tell the people of Bay St. George, it is nice to say they have a commitment from the hospital. Seven years later we do not even have the design done for the hospital in Corner Brook. I am not sure how long the courthouse is going to take. I do not know. I hope it is done a bit quicker than the hospital in Corner Brook, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Desiree Dunn, it is something I brought up before. The Premier always said: Show us the experts. Desiree Dunn is a radiologist. I know the Member for Humber West is listening attentively here. Desiree Dunn is a radiologist, end of life care, palliative care, and seniors. It is very important for seniors out in Western Newfoundland, Labrador, and Central.

Here is what Desiree Dunn said, and I commend Desiree Dunn and Dr. Bob Cook for coming out publicly and saying the information that is being presented is not accurate. I commend those two individuals. Here is what Desiree Dunn said, "Patients in western Newfoundland are not receiving the same end of life care as those on the east coast," because there is no radiation, because they cannot travel in. They are too sick. They are older. They do not have the energy to do it. They cannot leave their families. They cannot afford it, Mr. Speaker. That is what Desiree Dunn said.

Mr. Speaker, get this, Desiree Dunn also said the minute they move up, she takes them, and they start radiation, there is almost a 20 per cent increase. She never said it. All other places is 20 per cent, but she said there is a dramatic increase in patients who can never travel who are not included in the numbers. That is what she said.

People want to know. Mr. Speaker, when you had the minister and the government out talking about: Oh, there is only 172 or 182 PET scans

last year. Do you know what Dr. Bob Cook said? Do you know why there are only 182?

AN HON. MEMBER: Why?

MR. JOYCE: That is all he can get the Department of Health to send outside the Province to get done. It is just taking the facts and twisting the facts. It is just unbelievable. It takes a three month process to get someone to go for a PET scanner, but: Oh, that is all that was done.

Mr. Speaker, in closing on that part of it, I have to say we need to ensure that the radiation unit is going to be built into the design, which it is not now. We have to ensure that we all stand together, which I know as the minister – the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources speaking on behalf of government. I am confident now that I will be able to pull the rest of the government onside to get this moving. I am very confident.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I want to mention is roads. I want to talk about the roads in the Bay of Islands. When the roads come in for the Bay of Islands, there has been no major work done in the last – even in 2007 to 2011 there was one spot done here or there.

I brought it to the minister's attention. I have been presenting petitions in the House of Assembly a number of times, and there has been nothing done. I know capital works with water and sewer in the Bay of Islands, I am trying to meet with the minister and I will meet with the minister on it. It is no good minister to go and say, oh here is \$300,000 or \$400,000. You cannot get anything done.

If you are going to do something – and the government is always committing about water, they are always committing about other things in the district. We need something substantive. We have to have it. You just cannot let things deteriorate. The roads are unsafe.

I have a letter here from the Towns of York Harbour, Lark Harbour talking about the unsafe driving conditions. There are three major areas.

There is one in John's Beach; there is one out towards York Harbour; and, there is one in McIver's that has not been fixed. Although I have to give the minister credit, the minister said there is going to be a study. He informed me once the results come back from the study they will be fixed. Once again, the most I can do is hold the minister to his word. Once I hold the minister to his word, I am pretty confident it will be done.

I have to say something for the member who was just criticizing the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. Here are the comments that were made that she said only a fisherman. She said a fisherman, Mr. Speaker. What was meant by that is this party is inclusive, everybody. We have a fisherman here who is part of the FFAW and if you want to stand up, you should have spoken to the Member for Terra Nova who wrote her and apologized for the comments that she said. When she said it is a fisherman, we are an inclusive party, Mr. Speaker.

This party here is inclusive. We will bring anybody in here. Sam Slade is a good friend of mine. Sam Slade is welcome in this party, so for you to downgrade him it is shameful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair on a point of order.

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Cape St. Francis stood and said I insulted fishermen. Mr. Speaker, I am married to a fisherman. I come from a family of fishermen, and I have spent many days –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

MR. CORNECT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I start today, Mr. Speaker, on the beautiful Budget that we delivered in the month of March, I am going to have to tell you that I take no lectures or no lessons from the Opposition when it comes to commitments made to the people of the West Coast.

I was born and raised in Cape St. George, and I know about the commitments of the previous Liberal government on the Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital that was promised in four elections, 1989, 1993, 1996 and 1999 and did not deliver on the eve of the election of 2003.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Do not tell me about commitment and promises!

Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured and privileged to stand in this House of Assembly representing the great people of the District of Port au Port on the West Coast of this Province in this third session of the forty-seventh General Assembly to speak on Budget 2014.

A Budget that was themed, *Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook*. Mr. Speaker, shared prosperity is about working together to secure and maintain a sustainable future. It is about sharing equally, fairly, and fully the wealth that is being generated from the enormous economic wealth that we are experiencing in our Province today. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to a fair society. We are committed to care for those who are vulnerable and to support those who face difficulties to growth. We are committed to social justice.

Mr. Speaker, a balanced outlook is about developing a vision and setting goals on how to achieve a strong and sustainable economy. When you look at the economic indicators for 2014, Real Gross Domestic Product will grow

by 0.5 per cent this year, and employment growth of 0.3 per cent with an average employment of 233,500. Our 10-Year Sustainability Plan focuses on that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about the Budget investments through the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. Our government recognizes the importance that post-secondary education has for our students, our communities, and to the economy of our Province. That is why investing \$14.7 million for two years to complete the conversion of student loans to grants with a projected investment of approximately \$50.6 million over five years. Just to break it down a little further, in the fiscal year 2014-2015, \$2.1 million and in 2015-2016, \$12.6 million investment in the youth and students of our Province.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 7,000 students on a yearly basis are eligible to receive upfront grant assistance so they can have easier access to post-secondary education in our Province. Let me give you a little more insight on how this will work.

On August 1 of this year, the provincial student loans will decrease by \$20 per year of study and the grant portion will be increased by \$20. Students will be eligible to receive a maximum of \$40 per week of study in the form of a loan and \$100 per week of study in a grant. Mr. Speaker, effective August 1, 2015 provincial student loans will be completely replaced with non-repayable grants, an historic moment in the history of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Mr. Speaker, I do not know about you, but for me that is an amazing piece of work. That is planning. That is a government that has vision. That is a government that has the interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador first and foremost.

Mr. Speaker, this did not come by chance. We were focused on it for some time now. We have introduced other initiatives that are supported by

remarkable investments, such as the introduction of upfront, needs-based grants, the removal of interest on student loans and, of course, the ongoing tuition freeze at Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic, as we are leading the way to make post-secondary education in our Province more affordable and more accessible.

Speaking of the tuition freeze, Mr. Speaker, Budget 2014 allows for an investment of \$5.1 million, continuing the tuition freeze for students attending Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic. Our government has invested approximately \$283 million since 2005 to freeze tuition fees in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, to further help students, Budget 2014 will see \$3.5 million to continue summer employment programs for students. Under the program, up to an additional 200 summer placements will be created in our communities across the Province to help our students secure jobs for the summer to help along with their education and other needs while they are in post-secondary education. In total, approximately 2,000 students will receive valuable work experience through these programs, which speaks to our government's commitment to create opportunities for youth, reduce student debt, and build a better future for young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about our youth and students, how can the Opposition not support a Budget that speaks so highly and invests so highly in our youth and in our students? How can you not support it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CORNECT: I say to the hon. Member for Mount Pearl South, you supported every other Budget this government put in place since you have been elected.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I will ask the member to direct his comments to the Chair, please.

MR. CORNECT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is why in this year's Budget we are investing \$1.5 million to the College of the North Atlantic to support high-demand, high-priority programs. We are investing \$4 million in infrastructure at the College of the North Atlantic, which includes \$1.5 million for a medical sciences lab at the Grand Falls-Windsor campus, which was announced by my minister not so long ago. Furthermore, this Budget allows \$1.7 million for industrial shop modernization at college campuses throughout the Province. Since 2004, this government has invested more than \$48 million for infrastructure improvements and modernization at the College of the North Atlantic.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2014 also provides for investments at Memorial University of Newfoundland. We are investing \$1.1 million to continue the expansion of the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Sciences at MUN, this being year three of an eight-year initiative in the priority areas of ocean, Arctic, and offshore energy to support major project development and encourage private sector industry partnerships. We would ask: What will this investment do? It will also support increased enrolment of undergraduate and graduate students at the faculty. We are making our post-secondary institutions more affordable and more accessible to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, an investment of \$19 million in infrastructure at MUN will include: \$5 million to support continued modernization of MUN's older student residences; \$2.6 million for ongoing modernization of science laboratories; as well, the planning and the preparation with MUN for the development of a new science facility at Memorial's St. John's campus will continue. Since 2004, our government has allocated \$262 million to Memorial University of Newfoundland for a variety of infrastructure improvements, such as new residences in St.

John's and the beautiful Grenfell Campus right in Corner Brook.

This Budget speaks to the investment, Mr. Speaker, of \$1.9 million to increase base funding, year three of a three-year initiative at the Fisheries and Marine Institute to continue the expansion of educational programming, research, and student services for the continued growth in the ocean sector.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little about our support for the apprentices and trades in our Province, as this year's Budget allows for the investment of \$4.1 million. We are making an investment of \$1.8 million for the Government Hiring Apprenticeship Program. This program provides employment opportunities for skilled trades apprentices in the public sector and was introduced in 2006 by this government. Mr. Speaker, this program works by allowing various government departments and agencies to hire more apprentices throughout the reimbursement of payroll.

Mr. Speaker, since 2006 there has been an accumulative investment of over \$9.9 million and placements for approximately 324 apprentices. It is noteworthy to note that there are currently seventy-one apprentices employed with Transportation and Works, Memorial University Newfoundland, health boards, school boards, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

Through Budget 2014 we are making an investment of \$1.1 million, supported with \$6.6 million in federal funding, to continue the Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy Program. This program, Mr. Speaker, helps connect both prospective and registered apprentices with employers to provide them with their required work experiences. The program is primarily focused to support first- and second-year apprentices and includes those from underrepresented groups, such as women and persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$600,000 to support grants to organizations that provide or wish to provide supports for women and

Aboriginal people in pursuing a career in the skilled trades under the apprenticeship programs, with emphasis placed on females in trade areas predominately held by the male gender. The non-traditional areas for women, for example, are with construction, electrician, iron workers, carpenters, and welders.

Since 2009, there have been over 800 women registered as apprentices in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Office to Advance Women Apprentices has secured over 320 job opportunities for the women of our Province.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk a little about the supports for persons with disabilities. This year, we are investing \$12.6 million to advance inclusion and support employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The expected signing of a new four-year labour market agreement for persons with disabilities will see a \$12 million annual investment from the provincial government supported by a federal government investment of \$4.6 million.

Our government is also committed to spending \$600,000 to support the Vehicle Accessibility Program and inclusions program. What we will do is allot \$400,000 that will provide up to \$25,000 for vehicle retrofits to address transportation barriers for persons who have mobility-related disabilities. With the \$200,000 for inclusion grants, that will provide \$25,000 to non-profit, community-based organizations to enhance the accessibility of their facilities and events.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about our Poverty Reduction Strategy, the investments in this initiative, and programs and services offered for individuals and families of our Province. As you know, our Poverty Reduction Strategy is a government-wide approach to promoting self-reliance, opportunity, and access to key supports for persons vulnerable to poverty.

Budget 2014 includes an approximately \$170 million investment in the Poverty Reduction Strategy to support the long-term approach to the prevention, reduction, and alleviation of

poverty in our Province. This brings the total investment to reduce poverty since its inception 2006 – since 2006, this government has invested over \$1 billion to fight poverty in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and the provincial government will again partner with the Government of Canada to continue the \$68 million investment in the Affordable Housing Agreement for five years.

Key investments this year include: an investment of \$4.8 million to increase the basic rate for people receiving Income Support by 5 per cent beginning this July 1, and we are going to invest another \$32.3 million in the next five years; \$12 million over three years to extend the Residential Energy Efficiency Program, better known as REEP, and up to 1,000 low-income homeowners per year with energy refits needed will be able to avail of this program; \$1 million to increase the Rent Supplement Program, bringing the current \$8 million annual allocation to a new high of \$9 million for the Rent Supplement Program; \$500,000 in additional funding for the Supportive Living Program for a total annual investment of \$5.3 million to address homelessness in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing as well \$9 million over three years to extend the Home Modification Program to provide financial assistance to homeowners with disabilities or seniors with low to moderate incomes who require accessibility changes to their residences.

There is a \$350,000 contribution to a partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government to assist low-income private homeowners in Nunatsiavut to complete major renovations. There is \$700,000 to increase the extended drug card from six months to one year. This will allow an Income Support client to attach to the workforce for a longer period of time and continue to have drug costs covered for twelve months.

There is \$100,000 for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Community Centre Summer Employment Program. There is an extension to the Provincial Home Repair Program that assists

2,100 households with low incomes to make repairs to their homes. We will continue to invest in the Seniors' Benefit to those who are eligible as well.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2014 will allow seniors in this Province – will allow the Seniors' Benefit to increase to the highest level yet at \$1,036, up from \$971 in 2013. That is money for the provincial government. That payment comes in October of each year on the same cheque as the GST rebate cheque. This benefit is for seniors who are eligible.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this year we are increasing the Low Income Reduction Threshold eliminating provincial income tax for individual with a net income of up to \$18,547 and for families with a net income of up to \$31,362. Individuals can also receive partial tax reductions with a net income of \$22,815 and for families with a net income of \$38,006.

Mr. Speaker, I will get a chance sometime this spring to further talk about the investments in my district. Those are investments through the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, for which I am the proud Parliamentary Secretary to the minister. Through sound fiscal management and responsible decisions, our government is strengthening the business environment, encouraging the development of innovative industries, and building a vibrant economy for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is something we will continue and strive for each and every day while we are in government for the next decade.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands on a point of order.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order. The Member for Port au Port who is Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills stated there was

a hospital delayed out in Stephenville for a number of years by the Liberal government.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I thank the hon. member.

MR. JOYCE: You do not even know what it is yet.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Mr. Speaker, that was not even a good point, let alone a point of order.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly gives me pleasure to stand today and talk about this year's Budget, one that certainly we are very proud of on this side of the House, and one that takes a bit of time. Actually, the whole process of a Budget –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. FRENCH: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Bay of Islands is giving you some flak. Are we going to continue with debate and discussion?

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, the whole Budget process takes quite a bit of time to go through and certainly there is a bit of effort that goes into it and quite a bit of work goes into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. FRENCH: I have noticed that since I started speaking, Mr. Speaker, there is an awful lot of interest in the House. I do not know if it has anything to do with my speech or if it is just that the people on the other side are little more excited today than usual. I think they are excited about the Easter Bunny; I believe the Easter Bunny has everybody excited. The only thing is I thought it was after you ate the chocolate that you got the chocolate rush. I fear the members on the other side must already have the chocolate rush, but it is good to see – it is good to see. They had better behave or maybe the Easter Bunny will not come to them.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a delight for me to stand up and speak to the Budget this year. There are some really good things in this year's Budget. Obviously there is only so much money to go around. Obviously we would like to be everything to everybody. Unfortunately, that is not the case. When you sit on this side of the House, you sit through a Budget process and it can be difficult. It can be very, very difficult. There are challenging decisions to be made at all times, and it is not easy.

However, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is about striking the balance, and I think something we certainly did this year was strike the balance. I think we did a good job at it. Like I said, not everybody is going to be happy; they never will, unfortunately. When you sit here and have to make things happen, the dollars will only go so far. There were some tough decisions made this year, but certainly we believe in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We took quite a bit of advice from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador before we made the decisions that we did. As the Premier said, this was about listening to what we believe the people wanted, yet doing it was fiscally responsible.

I am proud to say this year in Conception Bay South we had a couple of big announcements that I am very, very proud of. One, of course, was a new library. We are in the process of partnering, actually, with the Town of CBS, and hopefully they will construct a building that we will lease from them for a number of years, Mr. Speaker. The people of Conception Bay South will have a state-of-the-art library for many, many years to come. This is a government that is certainly not into closing up libraries. Some of my colleagues on the opposite side of the House would like you to believe that, but that is certainly not the case.

We knew we had an issue in Conception Bay South. The Member for Harbour Main was certainly involved with me on that in Holyrood, as well as the Member for Topsail, and, of course, our minister. The Member for Burin – Placentia West was certainly involved with us and we had met and discussed this on a regular

basis until we found a resolution. We knew there was one there, so I want to acknowledge these people for stepping up for the residents of Conception Bay South and helping me solve an issue we had.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there was another significant issue and that was schools. We are in a growth area in Conception Bay South, and I am proud to say there has been money now committed. There was money the previous year for planning; this year there is money committed for the actual construction of the school. Again, that is something that we are very proud of. It is a need. It is something we have to have, and over the next couple of years we will certainly be building a beautiful new school in Conception Bay South, and hopefully many more amenities if I get my way.

I am also delighted, and it would be remiss of me if I did not point out the fact that in 2016 we will be hosting the Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games. It was actually twenty years ago since we did host it and I am proud to say we are following after Clarenville, which I had the privilege of attending, who did a bang up job. The Speaker of the House certainly likes to remind me of the great job they did in Clarenville. I know they did another great job in Carbonear – Harbour Grace. The Speaker tells me that we have something to live up to in Conception Bay South. Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy to put our reputations on the line in Conception Bay South. We will tell him we can certainly keep up and we will certainly do our best to exceed. As good as they were, we will certainly do our best to exceed.

Mr. Speaker, in this House a lot of times, after we go through Question Period, we get a lot of petitions. Sometimes the petitions are relevant, they are people's voices out there, and sometimes they are about just making a racket. People stand up in the House with two or three names on a list. I am not so sure they are as important as they would like you to believe. I had a petition there not too long ago from my district. There was not a person on the sheet who had signed it, so that will tell you how this works sometimes.

Mr. Speaker, on a lot of occasions in this House we will see petitions on broadband. Let me explain that I would love for every household to have high-speed Internet in this Province – I would love them to. Believe me when I tell you the investments we have made in high speed and broadband in this Province are unbelievable.

Since 2003, Mr. Speaker, we have invested \$31 million as a provincial government. From that \$31 million we have leveraged another \$118 million to put broadband throughout this Province. When we took over government in 2003 there were 113 communities that had broadband. Today there are over 500 communities that have broadband.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Over 95 per cent of our population today has broadband. We have not stopped, we are continuing to bull on, and we will continue to bull on. Just recently, Mr. Speaker, last week or the week before, I announced with the Coast of Bays another investment. Now we will see over 2,000 homes affected in that region of the Province. That was, I think, at a cost of \$1.4 million. We are in the process now of analyzing six or seven more proposals, and another announcement is forthcoming with \$4 million more of new announcements.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you hear about the lack of broadband, I think it is important for the people of the Province to realize just how far we have come and just some of the things we have done. Like I said, today we have over 95 per cent; almost 96 per cent of the population has high-speed Internet in this Province. That is something we are very proud of.

We are going to continue to work at the gaps and to fill in the gaps. We can only do it as fast as we can do it and we are certainly headed in the right direction, to go from 113 when we took over to over 500 today, Mr. Speaker. We saw it as an important issue for residents in this Province and so we put our money where our mouth is. Today with our partners, not alone, with companies out there who have also come to

us, it has worked. I want to acknowledge everybody who has been involved in taking us from where we were to where we are today, and like I said, that did not happen by accident.

You hear talk a lot that we are not a government that does anything for rural Newfoundland. You hear some of the members opposite refer to rural Newfoundland, you think that we are not concerned about rural Newfoundland and have done nothing for rural Newfoundland. Mr. Speaker, that is completely untrue.

Since 2005, we have invested \$200 million in economic and business development funding, Mr. Speaker – \$200 million. Here is the interesting thing about that. We know the Northeast Avalon in general is doing better than the rest of the Province because of the industries, because of its proximity to St. John's, and because of the oil industry. We are all aware of that. That is not lost on anybody. When you hear tell of this government investing \$200 million, some people on the other side of the House would automatically say: It is all in St. John's; it is all on the Northeast Avalon. Mr. Speaker, that, I can assure you, is absolutely untrue. Here is where they give the misleading statements.

Right now in this Province we have twenty-two regional offices scattered all over this Province – all over – north, south, east, west, Labrador, and all over. Mr. Speaker, out of those twenty-two offices we give all kinds of help, from regional development to help the small business and the list continues. The thing I wanted to point out, though, the most important point I wanted to make here, is of those \$200 million, 71 per cent of it is invested in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: When you sometimes hear those misleading statements that rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador get nothing, nothing could be further from the truth. Like I said, when you hear government say that 71 per cent of our rural development initiatives are outside the Northeast Avalon, and away from St.

John's, that dismisses what the others would like you to believe sometimes in this House, Mr. Speaker. It is something I wanted to point out. I think it is something important and something the people of the Province should know.

This year, again, we have approved another \$20 million that is going to be used for business development and regional development in this Province. I am looking forward, Mr. Speaker, to the numerous applications from businesses, from investors, and from people who are doing regional development throughout the Province to make their communities a better place to live and to create employment in these places.

Mr. Speaker, I have just touched on some rural broadband initiatives and I have touched on some rural development. When we talk about rural Newfoundland and Labrador, one of the success stories, one I have been a part of now for some time and one that I certainly enjoy doing, is our tourism industry. Our tourism industry has come up in leaps and bounds. I think from 2009 to 2012 we have jumped almost 20 per cent in visitation.

Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing about the visitation, the most interesting thing about that time period, here we are, we are up almost 20 per cent in that time frame. When you see some of our other colleagues, when you see the Maritimes are down 6.7 per cent over a similar period of time, you see Ontario down 7.2 per cent, you see Quebec down 3.7 per cent, and the country as a whole is down over 2 per cent, when you see those kinds of trends happening all around you and you see our Province of 500,000 people increasing almost 20 per cent over that time frame, you are doing something right.

It is certainly a job to criticize our marketing team that we have in our department and it is certainly a job to criticize Target Marketing, who together, I believe, has become one of the best one-two punches in the country when it comes to not only marketing tourism, marketing in general, marketing anything. Forget about just the tourism piece. They can market anything, and they have done a super job at it.

Like I said, when you see the trends happening around us and you see ours headed the other way, that is something to be very, very proud of.

With the 20 per cent increase, of course, we have a number of businesses across this Province that are involved in the tourism industry and benefit from the tourism industry. One of the interesting points is that over that same period of time we have seen tourism spending from non-residents coming to this Province up 30 per cent over that period. That is money going into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as business owners and being employed in the tourism industry, Mr. Speaker, and that is very, very important.

That is why we have grown. We have grown now to almost a billion dollars in spending. We had over 500,000 people come visit us in 2012-2013. So these are significant numbers and something we are very, very proud of and certainly delighted that it is working very well.

A couple of years ago, the year before last we did have a rough Budget, and, yes, we did reduce tourism advertising in this Province. We reduced it actually by \$4 million. It went from \$13 million to \$9 million. At that time we were in a financial crunch, and we are still in a bit of a financial crunch, but to hear others talk you would not know but we threw up our arms and forgot about the tourism industry and marketing the industry.

What we have done is we have committed to put \$2 million back this year and another \$2 million back the following year. Mr. Speaker, the \$4 million will be back in place by the next fiscal year. The biggest point of all is that since 2006 this government has invested over \$100 million in marketing; \$100 million to have an impact on people coming to this Province.

Once you have created the brand, which is what we did – we have one of the most recognizable brands now in the country. We are heralded. I think we are into 211 awards we have won now since 2006. This is big stuff. Interestingly

enough, most of it is in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I recently – I am saying recently, within the last year. I ran into somebody in Deer Lake. They had come to St. John's for a conference and there was a group of probably eight or ten who were flying to Deer Lake, some were going to St. Anthony, others were going to the West Coast, some were going to the South Coast, they were going hiking. Hiking, Mr. Speaker, even though they had come to St. John's for a convention. Obviously St. John's benefits, and obviously the rest of the Province benefits.

I have said many, many times, and I actually heard the Mayor of St. John's say this one time, he said obviously the stronger the capital city is the stronger the whole region is. I could not agree with him more. Here is one prime example of how we benefit.

There was another number I heard one time, that 50 per cent of the people who come to a convention in St. John's stay longer, and 50 per cent of them actually go outside of St. John's to visit. Obviously, again, the stronger St. John's is the stronger we are in the tourism industry right across the Province. The numbers speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things, recently in this House, too, we had a number of discussions about – I hear the Member for Bay of Islands gets up on a regular basis and talks openly and passionately about recreation and sport, which I am delighted, because I believe in recreation and sport, and always have. I have been a fan of it, like yourself, like many of us in this House I think, have been involved in recreation and sport at some point in our lives.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points I would like to make on recreation and sport, if I could. This is a government that when we took over office was spending \$1.3 million in the rec and sport budget in this Province – \$1.3 million. Mr. Speaker, today that is over \$7 million. The total now is \$7.3 million or \$7.4 million. So this is what we have done. We have taken recreation and sport in this Province to new heights.

If you talk to people who were around sport back in 2003, and people who are around sport today, and you notice some of the increases in programming, whether it is the after school program, Mr. Speaker, which is a significant piece. Right now it is twenty-four pilot sites we have been doing. We are going to do them for a couple of years – \$400,000 has been spread. There is an after school program to keep kids busy. Instead of being out, as the fellow says, beating the streets – not that we did not all do a little bit of that in our day – but it is certainly not a bad thing to keep kids active. This after school program, Mr. Speaker, does just that.

As well, of course, then we have our capital community program that helps the small communities that are under 5,000 people. They get a piece of money. Sometimes you hear the Member for Bay of Islands all disgusted because he did not get a grant for this group or did not get a grant for that group. What he did not tell you, Mr. Speaker, some of the things he does forget to mention is so many of the communities in his district benefit from that \$720,000. Mr. Speaker, this year I think his communities get almost \$11,000 in small community grants.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Seniors' Recreation Program. Our Seniors' Recreation Program is \$200,000, and then we give it out all across the Province. Another thing the Member for Bay of Islands forgets to tell you is that he got six of those. Seniors' groups in his district, six of them benefited from that piece of recreation. So, sometimes you hear things on the other side of the House that lead you to believe that they get nothing. Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of investments we have made – we have made, this government has made – in recreation and sport in this Province, and something that we are very, very proud of.

I could get into the investments that we have made in infrastructure in this Province. I think of my own community obviously. We are just starting to build a new arena there. I know there is one being built in Paradise as well. I know there are recreation facilities built in Mount Pearl. I know there are recreation facilities built in St. Anthony. I know there are recreation

facilities being built in Pasadena. I know there is a commitment for recreation facilities in Marystown. Mr. Speaker, they are all significant investments in infrastructure in recreation in this Province.

Sometimes you hear that there is nothing happening. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is always more to do, absolutely. When you hear talk of cuts to this and cuts to that, and they would like for you to believe everything is in the tank, Mr. Speaker, sport and recreation in this Province has been one of the biggest benefactors to have in this government on this side of the House I can guarantee you that. If you talk to anybody out there in sport and rec in this Province and they will tell you – anybody who has been involved in an organizational level will tell you.

We have another beautiful facility now over on Crosbie Road to help train for our Canada Games. In 2021 we are looking forward to hosting them again. I started the process now, we have had some people in who I have a lot of faith in the sport community – and came together to give us some advice as a government of how we take our athletes to the next level.

We talk about athletes for recreation purposes, but obviously we have to think about our elite athletes as well. That group has now come together. I am looking forward, I have not seen – they were putting some stuff for me to have a look at, some advice that I could take as the minister to bring our athletes to the next level.

I had the privilege of attending the Canada Games recently and watched our athletes perform. We had record numbers of better scores than ever before in our Province's history. Our number of medals might not have been to where we liked them; however we had our best times more than ever before. I just think of being at I think it was the 5,000 metre and I see two of our female athletes finished fifth and sixth. We have a small Province of 500,000 people and unfortunately just out of the medals – but to see two of our female athletes finish fifth and sixth in a country of 30 million

people is something I was very, very proud of and delighted.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point out some of the good things that are happening here. Sometimes you listen to the other side and there are a lot of bad things happening. Let me tell you we are very, very proud too to have our Olympian coming home.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Our Olympian is coming home for a visit on Thursday. She is going to be here hopefully in the building. I believe the current time is 1:30 o'clock. I encourage all members in this House – I know members from this side and members from the opposite side are more than welcome to greet Kaetlyn. One of our very own, a true athlete, a true ambassador for our Province, like the many, many more we see compete at the national and international level.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What an opportunity it is to speak to the Budget. I am certainly going to talk about a cut I am very proud is made in this Budget, and the cut is to the small business tax, which is something I have been advocating for, for a very long time. It is a good initiative made by this government because it is putting money back in the pockets of small-business owners, thousands of them across the Province and that is an initiative.

I wrote letters in the fall to the Minister of Finance pushing this issue, saying this has to be done. There was no intention of doing it at that time clearly, in the response from the letter. I am glad to see this is something that is in this year's Budget and small-business owners across the Province are glad to see that as well.

Before I get into tourism and talk about some of the things the minister had just mentioned, yesterday there was some discussion around Gross Domestic Product by the Attorney General. Being a business major myself, Mr. Speaker, and a former business owner, I love reading *The Economy* and what is there. It talks about that real GDP is expected to increase by just 0.5 per cent in 2014, and that is primarily due to higher consumer expenditures. The Attorney General had talked about how important GDP is and how we have been leading the country. If you read *The Economy* as to where GDP is going, we are not going to be leading the country as a whole when it comes to Canada on GDP as the forecasts move forward.

I do not necessarily agree that GDP, Gross Domestic Product, is necessarily the best measure to determine how well a Province or a country is doing. GDP, basically, Mr. Speaker, is the sum of all goods and services that are produced in Newfoundland and Labrador from all the bricks and mortar, from all the capital investments that are made in schools and hospitals, to all the table wear, to all the fish products and exports, to the widgets that are made. GDP measures outputs; it does not measure necessarily how well off and our well-being. There are other indexes that could do that.

There are many things that are not monetized. It does not count, for example, people who provide care. It does not count that. If they are doing labour in their own household, this is not monetized. If they are taking care of children, this is not monetized. If they are taking care of the elderly, this is not monetized. If they are taking care of people with disabilities in their home, this is not monetized. This is not looked at as a value of a Gross Domestic Product. It is not valued as an output when you look strictly at GDP.

Clean air is not counted when you look at GDP, but certainly something important to an economy and to the well-being and to growth and the potential that we have a stable climate and a number of other factors. Some things are counted actually in GDP that really does not

help. It does not help an economy at all. If you look at the expropriation of the Abitibi assets and what the remediation cost will be, it is an environmental hazard that this government has to deal with. When they clean it up, all of that cost, the \$100 million, \$200 million, is added to GDP but does that make the individual Newfoundlander and Labradorean well off? No, it does not make them any better off.

When BP had the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that whole catastrophe added into the United States GDP about \$90 billion to maybe \$100 billion. That would give the average American, the capital of GDP, saying well, that is about \$300 per person in the United States of America, but that is a negative aspect of GDP.

For members opposite to be constantly promoting, we are leading in GDP. Well, there could be a lot of negatives in the GDP that is causing it to rise as well, just like it was in the United States when you look at the oil spill in BP. That does not make people better off at all. GDP mixes in the good, the bad; it is not necessarily a good key indicator. It is a poor way to measure performance. I just want to put that on the record for the Attorney General that I personally think that GDP is a real poor measure.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about the tourism industry, as the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation talked about. If we look at *The Economy* visitation in 2012 for non-resident visitors was 505,300 people. Last year, it went down 7,400 people; a 1.5 per cent drop last year, 497,900. Last year this government cut \$4 million from its advertising budget. You can see a ripple effect already by cutting marketing when you are –

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, on a point of order.

MR. FRENCH: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point out an inaccuracy here. Actually, this season is on the previous year's marketing

money, so the hon. member has no idea what he is talking about. So, it is prior to the cuts.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, we will certainly see when the numbers come forward, because if you are not investing in marketing dollars you will see a continuous drop in non-visitor traffic. If we look at all the indicators, if we look at the auto traffic down about 6 per cent and we look at cruise down 21.1 per cent – and the minister presented last year at Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and said we are a billion-dollar industry. Well, the majority of that billion-dollar industry is generated by the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. The majority comes from the people right here.

If you travel just a few kilometres, forty kilometres outside, you are considered a tourist, and that money gets monetized into this overall billion dollars. The spending, actually, if we look at from 2012 for non-residents, was \$458 million and last year it was \$467 million, so a small change of 1.8 per cent. We need to get more out of non-visitor traffic because that is new dollars and that is more money that can be recirculated into the economy.

I do not think the minister and I are too different in our viewpoints as to how we would like to grow tourism industry. Both of us are very passionate about the industry. I have worked in the industry and I certainly understand there needs to be key things to develop the industry when it comes to transportation. Access is a key thing. We are so much more expensive.

We need to see what the outputs are from the Air Access Strategy. We need to tackle it when see rates go up at places like Marine Atlantic. Is there a way where we can see rates stabilized so everybody can benefit, whether it is visitation or whether it is commercial traffic, and we can still maintain a high quality service? That is our road

map. We need to look at other services as well when we look at how we develop and expand tourism.

The minister talked about it and I have talked about it quite a bit, and I do not think any of the petitions I have brought forward have been nonsensical when it comes to broadband. It is certainly not a phony one when I represent my constituents in a community like Pines Cove, a community like Goose Cove, a community like Bide Arm, or any of the other communities in my district that do not have access to broadband Internet. When you can make the case for them, especially in Pines Cove where you have a major development happening, millions of dollars spent, and for the sake of a small sum of money and simple solution, they could have broadband Internet. I do not understand why they cannot see that benefit.

You are having industry happen in your backyard and that input is not passing along to people, not to the people who live there. They are going to be no better off at the end of the day after that development is done. They should be able to see some benefit where government is giving back to the people of Pines Cove.

One of the things that government invested in last year in my district, that is open now, and I am very pleased to see it, is the new health care facility in the Town of Flower's Cove. It is a regional facility, the Strait of Belle Isle Health Center, but one of the things I am not proud about is that there were not any public consultations. The government appears to say it is turning over a new leaf and it is going to listen to the people now. It should have listened to the people then because the people would have had some consultation in the process.

They have been saying now, after the fact, after this hospital has been built, there is no space and there are storage issues. We have seen it with schools where people are doing this cramming and jamming. They cannot find space. Until we have an adequate plan, we truly consult with people, and we have a long-term vision, then we are going to come into the same problems over and over again.

It makes no sense why there is no palliative care at the Strait of Belle Isle Health Centre. We look at the chronic demand and growing need for people on hemodialysis. There are seven patients utilizing hemodialysis and traveling from this region. The demand is only going to get bigger and bigger. To not look at having space for future planning to look at adding hemodialysis at the Strait of Belle Isle Health Centre is key.

We have an aging population. In my District of The Straits – White Bay North, we have one of the oldest average populations in Newfoundland and Labrador. Long-term care is a critical issue. We are all getting older. We all have parents. We all have grandparents. There are seniors who do not know where they are going to live for the long-term, based on if something happens.

Right now we have a long-term care facility, the John M. Grey in St. Anthony, that is at capacity. We have a hospital that has a number of beds where people need to be in long-term care, but they cannot get there. There are people getting discharged and getting sent home. We are not providing a long-term care strategy that meets the needs of people.

We have personal care homes in my district that are at capacity, in St. Anthony, in Roddickton, and Flower's Cove. I am very proud to see when you look at Flower's Cove and it is a non-profit personal care home. It was built because people saw the need. Groups and stakeholders got together and they run that. They have expanded from twenty beds right up now to thirty-six beds. You see the growing demand. It is such a difficulty for people to find the capital to get in and build personal care homes when it comes to seniors' housing, how we get there, and how we meet those needs.

There are certainly struggles, but I think the capital exists. Whether we use funds like the Immigrant Investor Fund that has from the federal government a constant influx of money, we could do capital projects and pay that out to investors to put in real capital. They can pay it back, put back into that fund, and we can see

real return. These are things we need to do, Mr. Speaker.

We need to do it because we need to make sure we are reducing the overall cost of delivery of health care. Our Budget is unsustainable. We see it in Budget 2014 where the government does not have enough money to pay for services. They do not have enough money to pay for programs, services, and capital. They do not because they are borrowing. They are borrowing \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker, that they do not have in this year's Budget to continue to announce new money and continue other services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Where is the new money going to come from? Money has to come from either diversifying the economy and creating more revenues or government is going to have to look at borrowing additional money. They only have a couple of methods as to how they are going to generate revenues. In the short term there is a real challenge of how we spend money and looking at the long term.

If we can find solutions in the short term that will help save us some money – like in the Budget, for example, there are physiotherapy and occupational therapy positions listed. There is a real deficiency on the Great Northern Peninsula, for example, in physiotherapy. Wait-lists are excessive. There are people who are off on leave to fill positions. Budgets are so limited in health authorities. The occupational therapy position in St. Anthony, for example, is done now only on a visiting basis. We have to look at better ways when it comes to recruitment and retention.

We have seen government act in indecision when it comes to midwifery, something that we had working at Labrador-Grenfell Health for decades. Midwifery has been around longer than any of the health authorities. The health outcomes they can provide through the education, the prenatal, the postnatal, and

through the delivery process, the amount of savings they can provide, and that connection and that relationship that you have, gives better health outcomes overall. It does not put into play for the low-risk pregnancies and deliveries that you do not have to have that surge on call twenty-four seven to be able to deal with that. They would come in, in an emergency situation, should the need be.

I have spoken many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, on nurse practitioner clinics and how we should be utilizing them. We have nurse practitioners employed in clinics who are not doing regular nine-to-five clinics when we do not have the full complement of physicians. It does not make sense. Nurse practitioners, especially if they are from the region in which they are working, are likely to stay for the long term. We can have long-term benefits from that.

I have seen in my district many times how dental services are not meeting the needs of people. They are just not there. We need to look at a different model, a model that likely is applied in other health authorities across the Province. We do not have a fee for service or a mixed model.

When we look at the Adult Dental Program, I have people who first started this in 2012 and they still do not have their dentures, and they should be covered under the old dental program. That is a big challenge when we talk about standardized and delivery of care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – such a challenge.

There is limited access as well when we look at our Newfoundland and Labrador Drug Program. We need to look at that. We need to look at how we can make sure that, for example, seniors who are living in personal care homes and they are only getting \$150 because they are being subsidized in that bed, how can they afford to pay for drugs beyond their \$150? It is a real challenge but it exists, and there is a real delay in people being able to get the medications they need. We are pushing people into sheer bankruptcy in many cases, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things the member opposite talked about was petitions, and there was a petition for the CBS library. In the Budget, it talked about how the CBS library will be preserved. On government's Open Government Initiative and on all its spatial maps it lists the public library in St. Lunaire-Griquet as temporarily closed. It has been temporarily closed since January 1 of this year.

There has been \$200,000 allocated in the Budget, so that is something that government should look at. When does temporarily become open again, or is it going to be permanently closed? Is the minister intent on taking books away from children and away from people? There is a different option, there is a better option. I am sure we can find that.

We need to look at the economy and providing stability in the economy, especially our rural based economy that is so dependent on our natural resources. When we look at the forestry, when we look at the fishery, when we look at mining, when we look at the potential for oil and gas development, these are all things that are so critical to our rural based economy. Particularly, when we look at getting the best outputs.

When I look at GDP, like I said in the beginning, you can clear-cut a forest for \$10 million and send that out and that is \$10 million worth of GDP; or you can take \$10 million of forest raw product and then you can create real value in the chain by ensuring that sawmills get lumber to produce high-valued products. We can be creating secondary processing from that, whether we are doing mulch, whether we are doing pellets, whether we are doing a finger-board plant, or what other potential, whether we are looking at pressure treated, and is that potential here?

We truly need to diversify our depressed industries that are happening in the Province. We cannot be so focused on non-renewables that we are not really developing forestry resources here and getting maximum benefit. Why are we continuously exporting our jobs and exporting our opportunities? Because we are seeing it so often.

We see that as well in the fishery where jobs are basically being exported, when we are not creating the true value here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have significant challenges happening right now when we look at lobster sustainability, when we look at the cuts to shrimp, when we look at what that is going to mean for the economy. Where is the long-term plan to build a more stable, a more predictable government decision when it comes to budgets?

That comes back to the point where governments need to look at multi-year budgets and also work with community, work with stakeholders, work with industry to have a multi-year plan so that we cannot be dealing with crisis to crisis to crisis. That we can actually be looking at the investments we make and how we are going to truly pay for them in the long term.

I think we have a significant opportunity to look in health care and to find those savings through making better decisions, making the right investments in health care so we have money that can be put in overall to advance the economy, whether it is in advanced transportation or advanced telecommunications.

Mr. Speaker, I will have more time to get in and speak to Budget 2014.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to get up and speak to this Budget, Budget 2014-2015 because I think it is one of the best budgets that I have witnessed since 2003 when I was first elected as the MHA for Gander, and now I am the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

I reflect in regard to what I hear across the House all the time in regard to some of the things they might say and the things that they

might criticize. The thing that is quite prevalent to me is, really, there is no vision and there is no platform in regard to anything that they might reference, Mr. Speaker. As my hon. colleague, the Minister of Tourism said, if you listen to them, you would think we have not invested in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have never invested in Newfoundland and Labrador.

When I look across the House, I actually see three fire trucks that I invested when I was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services. I see many projects in regard to municipal capital works and all that kind of good stuff. I am not saying we did not invest in our own districts, but what I am saying is we have treated the people of this Province fairly and balanced, I say to the hon. member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: That is exactly what we have done. Like that or lump it, you cannot take it and you cannot get up and refute it. I can go through a litany of investments we have made throughout this Province regardless of political stripe, regardless of where the district is, and we have invested.

We have invested in Labrador, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Tourism mentioned a number of investments as regards to recreational facilities. I invested when I was the minister responsible at that particular time in a stadium up in Makkovik. That is just about built now. I think it is. It is working its way along and it will be there. As well, I have invested in Nain, I have invested in Hopedale, just to name a couple of communities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to my kids. I want to reference right now my kids. I have three daughters who are very dear to our hearts, myself and Rhonda's hearts. Back in 1999, I ran in that particular election and the attitude in Gander at that particular time was the last person left, turn the lights out. There was actually a front-page article in *The Gander Beacon* that has a picture down Byrd Avenue and the caption said: Who will win, O'Brien or the real estate?

There were sixty-odd homes for sale on Byrd Avenue in that particular year.

You can go into Gander today, and I know my hon. colleagues visit the Town of Gander at various times in their travels. Absolutely, they cannot get on their feet today and refute the growth in that particular community in regard to how it has grown. As well, I am not going to take and government is not going to take all the credit for that because that comes with confidence in the economy in regard to that growth. It comes with investment by government, investment in education, investment in health care, and all that kind of good stuff that drives the economy.

As a matter of fact, in regard to Gander, I said one time, and I said this publicly after the 1999 election, in between there and 2003, that I actually did not think either one of my children would ever live in Newfoundland and Labrador. Now I can safely say two of them are absolutely going to live in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a matter of fact, two of them are absolutely going to live in Gander. As well, the other one may very well, too. That is because of the advancements we have made in Newfoundland and Labrador; number one, in regard to the economy that we have created and all the great projects that we have created, the confidence that we have created in the business community in regard to investing. As well, Mr. Speaker, we have invested in education. That is the very foundation, the future of any government, of any province, of any country.

As a matter of fact I was driving to work this morning, I was coming across the Crosstown Arterial and I always listen to CBC Radio. I know that it has made the national news as well. There was an article on. Really the caption or the headline in regard to the article was termed Generation Screwed.

What it said, “For an entire generation of Canadians bound for university the road is more daunting than ever.” I will quote from the article and I would be happy to table it. As a matter of fact, I want to table the document that I have in my hands.

It goes on, there are several people involved David Common, Karen Pauls, and Jay Rond. I will not read it all but I will just read what David Common said. He said, “For an entire generation of Canadians bound for university the road is more daunting than ever. Tuition for post-secondary education has skyrocketed and wages haven’t kept close in keeping up. Young people must work for more to pay for school and will enter the workforce with vastly more debt than their parents did. Karen Pauls with our series Generation Screwed.”

I go on, Karen Pauls says, “It is hard for Jay Rond to find the time to study. She works two jobs so she can pay the tuition for her arts degree and cover her basic living expenses.” Francis Fong says, “We are a knowledge-based economy and post-secondary education really is that defining factor behind the have and the have nots.” We have recognized that, Mr. Speaker, absolutely. We have invested because of that very statement that Francis Fong said on CBC this morning.

Then I will go on to Armine, and this is what she says and this is what you have to listen to, “I take a look at a province like Newfoundland and Labrador and you see a government that is dedicated to increasing the minimum wage, reducing tuition, making sure that everybody is treated the same way.” Karen Pauls goes on to say: I would like more governments to find the same balance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O’BRIEN: That is a testament to what we are doing in this Province, I say to the hon. member. I will table that document. I would ask the hon. members across the House to take that document and read it. Yes, absolutely and I agree – sure it is the right of the Opposition to ask questions and whatnot. I absolutely welcome that; always did and always will.

I never had any issue in regard to any of the portfolios that I have been in where I did not answer the questions or I did not meet with hon. members or meeting with councils when I was in that portfolio, whatever it may be, in regard to

stakeholders or whatever, to answer those questions to learn of the wants and needs and challenges right across this Province, where I could, as a minister, react more effectively. Certainly I think in my own heart and soul that I have tried to do that, and hopefully I have succeeded.

We have invested in education. I know the hon. Member for Port au Port pointed out a lot of the investments are within Advanced Education and Skills. I will not get into all those investments again because he went through them and articulated that very, very well. One of the things I do not think he mentioned is that we have invested in residences – which I had a minister's statement here today - residences in Grenfell in regard to Corner Brook, and also in Memorial University, to the tune of \$88.3 million. That is not counting all we have invested in modernizing the residences here are MUN, the old residences, which we have done as well, absolutely. The thing that is missing here, and the people do not really realize, is the cost of residence to a person in Newfoundland and Labrador is actually 68 per cent less than any other university in Canada – 68 per cent less.

So not only have we had our tuition freeze to the tune of \$280-odd million over the last number of years to keep that tuition freeze in place, and then in this year's Budget of moving loans to grants – which is a huge investment of \$14.7 million over two years – but we have invested in residences as well. Modernized residences where people have really good accommodations; not only to live, but also to learn. That has to be conducive. It is not just a place that you just lie your head down and that is all that is to it. That is not what it is all about. Learning space now is really important to the students and the youth of our Province, and the youth of Canada, I say. We have taken all of that into account, every piece of it we have taken into account in regard to Memorial University and CNA.

Speaking of CNA and the great work that they are doing – and I am not even into my own department. The College of the North Atlantic and the people that work in College of the North

Atlantic are influencing so many lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. Young people who have aspirations, they can see the economy, they can see the big projects, and they want to have trades. They want to succeed; they want to be able to live in Newfoundland and Labrador. They want to raise a family; they want to have a future.

I am really proud of the people who work in CNA who actually influenced those lives, give them the opportunity, helped them achieve it. We have invested heavily in the College of the North Atlantic over the last number of years. As a matter of fact, I know one of the hon. members across the House is questioning the apprenticeships. We have more apprentices in this Province now than we ever did in the history of our Province. As a matter of fact, registered apprentices make up 6,300 individuals on the list right now and what that means is that they are either on the job working on the big projects, various shops across Newfoundland and Labrador, either that or they are in their block training, Mr. Speaker.

That is not counting them all, Mr. Speaker, because there is another group too, because that is self-driven. We cannot drive them into the apprenticeship program and to the journey person; they made that decision themselves. There is another group of people out there who have not availed of that process and they are actually out there working as well. They went and did an electrician course, they went and did a heavy equipment course, whatever it may be, but they decided to work and they are making big money on job sites right across Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what they are making.

Really, to be honest with you – and that is their own choice that they would do that, but they just do not have the time to do the block training. Can they enter the program at some point in time as we go forward? Absolutely. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, since 2005 we have doubled the number of Red Seal journey persons in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a phenomenal accomplishment. That is a process that they have to go through in regard to

becoming Red Seal. Certainly, we will keep working in regard to that and keep things moving.

As my time runs along here, I have to reference my own department and the work that happens within Advanced Education and Skills. We touch people's lives in a way every day and we try to address their issues and their challenges. As a matter of fact, we have about 15,000 or 16,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador that will be on Income Support for the rest of their lives because of complex issues; they are the most vulnerable of our Province. Certainly, we have to try to support them as a people. We have to share the wealth.

I was so proud to sit in this House and see the Minister of Finance, along with the Premier, announce a 5 per cent raise in the basic rate of people receiving Income Support; 5 per cent, which means \$4.8 million starting in July because then it is annualized by \$6.5 million, which means a \$32.3 million investment over the next five years.

That is absolutely fabulous. I am doing a lot of other work within the department as well, I say to the hon. the Leader of the Third Party. She does not recognize what we have done in poverty reduction: \$170 million; over \$1 billion since it was first introduced. It is hailed by people right across Canada, right across North America. Stand on your feet and give me your platform, I say to the hon. member. If you are going to yap at me, get up there and tell me because you did not have anything in whatever book you had, orange book or whatever you had

—

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. O'BRIEN: — in regard to the most vulnerable in our Province, absolutely. I would think that each and every one of us here in this House would have a place in their heart with regard to the vulnerable people in this Province, absolutely.

I, as a pharmacist, back when I was a pharmacist in Gander, I served a lot of those people and it makes me really proud to see a government take on the issue in regard to poverty and have such a dramatic impact.

Are there people here in this Province living in poverty? Absolutely there are, because you cannot eradicate it overnight and make everybody have. You just cannot do it, absolutely not. That is not achievable. Do we try to achieve that? Do we reach for the stars? Absolutely, we do and that is the reason why we invested that 5 per cent and that is the reason why we raised that basic rate. We support those people in a lot of other ways.

Another part of my department is people with disabilities. I take that really, really seriously. Inclusion grants that we provide to various groups to make their buildings inclusive, make them accessible to those people, providing grants to groups and individuals to make their vehicles accessible, this is all good investment, Mr. Speaker. Can we meet all the needs of all of those particular people in that community today? No, absolutely, we cannot, I say to the hon. member again. It is great to chirp, but it is something else to do something about it and we are doing something about it, I say to this hon. member across the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: I talk with passion when I talk about the most vulnerable people in our Province because I have seen it. I have seen it first-hand all of my life. I will continue to fight for those people in each and every way that I possibly can.

Each and every day my department touches the lives of people. Take my labour market division, Mr. Speaker, touching all of those individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador — and they are not all youth. There are people of all ages who are trying to seize the opportunity — for the first time in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador they can actually see that bright light that they may very well be able to seize an opportunity and have some success in their life.

What are they doing, Mr. Speaker? They are asking our department, my labour market division, for supports in education, and going back to CNA and going back to the private colleges to get some type of a trade, Mr. Speaker.

That is the reason why we invested over \$30.8 million in labour training, Mr. Speaker. It was only the other day I referenced that number. Along with the federal component, we invest \$164 million per year to enable over 14,000 individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador to get direct funding to obtain training in one of the colleges, be it private or be it our public system called the College of the North Atlantic in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. One hundred and sixty-four million dollars through all the various programs, but you listen to them, we are not doing anything, Mr. Speaker. It is so easy – as a matter of fact I think if I were over there, I would have a heyday in regard to getting up and saying this and saying that, but they are saying nothing, actually, absolutely nothing.

I have not heard now in the last ten or twelve years in regard to a really solid platform looking forward, having vision in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have always had that vision. That is the reason why you cannot compare Newfoundland and Labrador today to what it was in 2003. You cannot compare it, the advancements that we have made.

Do we touch every community in Newfoundland and Labrador, in rural Newfoundland and Labrador? Absolutely not; but are they touched in some type of a way in investments in education and investments in health care? Absolutely, they are. They are touched in ways that they really do not know.

Back only a couple of years ago, one of the items that we brought in that touched everybody in this House of Assembly, including our young Pages, I would say, we took off the tax on auto insurance. That is what we did. That put dollars right back into their pockets, Mr. Speaker. That is the kind of thing that we did in innovation, in regard to putting the tax dollars right back into the people who earned it, where they can spend

it and to have more meaningful lives. That might seem to be a small amount. It might have been only \$100 in the tax on auto insurance, but it is \$100. It is \$100 that they did not have to go out and scrape and work for. That is what we have done. We have recognized, as well, in regard to the minimum wage. We have advanced that as best we can, keeping the balance between business – listen, we have done a lot of things.

As well, before I get down, Mr. Speaker, I am proud of my district. We have made some significant investments in Gander over the last couple of days. Two schools are going to be built in Gander, a hangar is going to be built in Gander, \$6.3 million for the Town of Gander, \$16 million for the James Paton Memorial Hospital – \$16 million to finish a project that was started by the Liberal government that they could not finish, I say to the hon. members, but I am going to finish it, absolutely – I am going to finish it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow, Private Members' Day.

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