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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 regular proceedings today, we will adhere to a time honoured tradition as we welcome new members to the House of Assembly. Today we are going to be welcoming Ms Cathy Bennett, who was just recently elected to the District of Virginia Waters in a by-election on April 9. I have been advised by the Clerk that she has taken her Oath of Allegiance as required by the Constitution and has also signed the Members' Roll.

Welcome, Ms Cathy Bennett.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I present to you Ms Cathy Bennett, the Member for Virginia Waters, who claims the right to her seat.

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of Port au Port, the Member for the District of Bonavista North, the Member for the District of Burgeo – La Poile, the Member for the District of Kilbride, the Member for the District of St. John's South, and the Member for the District of Exploits.

The hon. the Member for the District of Port au Port.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to congratulate the winners and nominees who were honoured at the Stephen Awards Banquet in Stephenville on April 13 as part of Volunteer Week 2014.

Rosa Dollard was honoured with the Citizen of the Year Award while Simal Qureshi was the recipient of the Youth of the Year Award, both being recognized for their outstanding volunteer service to their community. Tiuri Lomond won the Junior Male Athlete of the Year Award; Rita-Jane St. Croix was presented with the Junior Female Athlete of the Year Award and Chris Dugas was presented with the Senior Athlete of the Year Award.

Twenty-seven Certificates of Merit for outstanding volunteer work were also presented, Mr. Speaker. Marie Alexander, Cator Best, Cecelia Burke, Mary Burt, Mark Burt, Wayne Butt, Norma Childs, Tom Collier, Debra Coughlin, Michele Dawson, J.J. Furlong, Susan Gallant, Don Gibbon, Michelle Hawco-Stokes, Yvonne Healey, Arch Locke, Gwen Lomond, Angela LeRoy, Ivan MacDonald, Nancy MacDonald, Avril McIsaac, Lloyd Pye, Mondella Stacey, Corinne Tulk, Christopher Vaughn, Chelsey White and Gus Willette.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all the members to join with me in congratulating all the winners and nominees of the Stephen Awards on their invaluable contributions to our communities, our Province, and our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSS: Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in standing today to recognize the artistic efforts of a young constituent.

In October 2013, Ocean Rogers, along with many classmates and students from Centreville Academy and hundreds of others from around the Province participated in a poster contest sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion.

Ocean submitted her pencil sketch, as no colour was allowed, which represented the symbolism that Remembrance Day meant to a fifth grader in a small rural community.

On April 17, 2014, just a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Nelson Granter, a representative of the

Royal Canadian Legion visited Centreville Academy where Ocean Rogers received a certificate and monetary prize for her art work and she was declared the provincial winner for her category.

I am sure that in years to come, Ocean will look back on the 100th Anniversary of the start of World War I and have a special memory of her award and this remarkable year.

I am sure as a collective voice of this House of Assembly, I extend congratulations to Ocean. I am also confident that projects sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion and the eager participation of students at schools like Centreville Academy, we will never forget the contribution of those who sacrificed for our freedoms.

Lest we forget, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise today to recognize the efforts of the Autism Involves Me, or AIM for short, group and the generous donors who assisted with the purchase of physical and sensory equipment for special needs children.

The AIM sports program takes place at the Bruce II sports complex in Port aux Basques, which provides free space for the equipment and staff to set up the equipment. In exchange for this space, the Bruce II is able to use this same equipment to provide a program for pre-school children. This joint initiative is working quite well for everyone involved, and most importantly, the children.

There are two main categories of equipment, one for the physical aspect and the other for sensory awareness.

The group received their initial funding from the Jump Start Program and Canadian Tire. This was followed with donations from local businesses and parents of an autistic child. This is a fantastic way for special needs children to

participate in physical activity at their own pace and without any pressure or intimidation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in extending congratulations to the AIM group and the Bruce II sports complex in providing a safe and happy environment for special needs children to participate in physical activities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House today to highlight a very successful local business in the District of Kilbride that was recently profiled in *The Telegram*.

Topsailstar Pet Center, located at 70 Ruby Line, is dedicated to pet care and training twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The owners, Valerie and Barry Reid, pride themselves on running a top-notch business that provides daycare and boarding for dogs that are fully vaccinated. Training and grooming services are also provided. Topsailstar is a busy place with lots of happy dogs around at all times.

Personnel working at Topsailstar are trained in handling and caring for dogs, and that includes everyone from groomers to kennel attendants, to those who entertain and supervise the dogs at playtime – a total of ten employees, counting the owners. Topsailstar Pet Center also features a retail section with an assortment of nutritious foods, toys, and other products.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of this House of Assembly to join me in commending Valerie and Barry Reid for operating such a good and successful business.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Travis Penny, a junior high school student at St. John Bosco School in my district. Travis is currently in Winnipeg, Manitoba representing Newfoundland and Labrador at Youth Bowling Canada, their National Championships.

It is always exciting to see young people excel in the area of sport within our Province, but it is especially exciting to see them earn their spot to compete on the national level. Travis' success has no doubt been achieved through hard work and his dedication to his sport.

I would like all hon. members to join with me in congratulating Travis and in wishing him well during the remainder of his competitions at the Youth Bowling Canada, National Championships.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in this House today to recognize the contributions to the Town of Leading Tickles by the Leading Tickles Volunteer Firefighters, in particular, the dedication of Mr. Cliff Chippett who was chosen Firefighter of the Year.

We are all aware of the commitment of these volunteers being ready for duty twenty-four hours a day and, of course, this would not be possible without the support they receive from their families. Cliff has given his time unselfishly for the good of his community, always ready to respond to emergency situations, to volunteering for community events, and helping those in need. For these reasons, his dedication is certainly recognized by his peers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Cliff Chippett on being named Firefighter of the Year.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House today to talk about Emergency Preparedness Week 2014, which takes place this week from May 4-10.

Public safety is a top priority of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly during emergency situations, and being prepared can make a huge difference and save lives. Individuals, families, communities, and all levels of government should be ready to respond to any emergency that may occur.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly recommend all residents of the Province to know the risks, make a plan, and assemble an emergency kit. I would also like to encourage residents to visit getprepared.ca, for tips and basic directions about how to assemble a seventy-two-hour emergency kit for their homes.

Emergency Preparedness Week is an excellent opportunity for families and the neighbours to engage with one another, and have conversations about how they can help each other during emergencies. By having these important discussions, residents will be better prepared to face any emergency situation that may arise.

Mr. Speaker, on a municipal level, communities are encouraged to update their emergency management plans and validate them through emergency exercises. Through Fire and Emergency Services-Newfoundland and Labrador, our government supports municipalities, government departments and agencies in developing, maintaining, and exercising emergency management plans. We

continue to stress the importance of this on a daily basis.

I would like to highlight our recent participation in Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador's Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Management Conference that took place last week in Gander. During this conference, Fire and Emergency Services officials joined municipal leaders, the Canadian Red Cross, the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador, the media, and other stakeholders to learn from each other and discuss the importance of emergency preparedness.

Finally, I would like to ask all hon. members in this House today, are you ready? If not, start preparing immediately during Emergency Preparedness Week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The Opposition also understands the importance of being prepared for emergencies. If you look at DarkNL, which was a crisis in my view that we had, and just as the report that came back on DarkNL it said we will have future blackouts. The need for being prepared is even getting greater with natural flooding that happens in Newfoundland and Labrador and natural disasters. We all need to be ready and prepared.

Mr. Speaker, to the municipalities, a lot of municipalities – and we asked this question this morning in Estimates – about 85 per cent do have their plan in or are in the process of finishing their plan, but the municipalities need resources so they can carry out their plan in time of need.

To the Red Cross, the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, and other groups, congratulations for stepping up to the plate on many occasions to help out Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, I know the minister has spoken to them. For people with disabilities, that is a different, unique set of circumstances that we must face. We must have a plan for different communities for people with disabilities.

We encourage everybody to be prepared. We encourage government to keep up the work to help towns to have their emergency plans updated on a regular basis. We urge the government to supply water resources –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MR. JOYCE: 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 also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. It was good to hear in Estimates this morning, of course, that there were 96 per cent of municipalities, I think, so far that had their emergency plans. We need to get that other 4 per cent done, so I encourage the minister to keep pursuing that.

We know we are facing dark ages coming ahead, not only with the challenges with electricity, but the challenges as well for climate change. We know we have to see more government investment, for example, in roads and bridges. We know the Auditor General has said that.

We also have to have our confidence as well – and government needs to let the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know this – to know that government has been doing the right things, for example, for 911. They say 911 is going to be ready for December 2012. We are hoping they are going to meet the challenge, but we need to hear those regular updates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today is *STOP! Clean Your Hands Day*, a national event that coincides with a global initiative of the World Health Organization called *Save Lives: Clean Your Hands*.

The focus of today is to bring greater awareness to the importance of washing our hands as a way of preventing disease by controlling the spread of germs.

The simple task of washing your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based rub can have a significant impact on your health and on the health of everyone you come in contact with.

For our health care workers, hand hygiene remains the primary means of reducing health care associated infections.

Mr. Speaker, we have placed an emphasis on hand hygiene and we have provided the necessary resources to ensure that patients are protected.

While there is always room for improvement, the number of health care associated infections has declined in Newfoundland and Labrador since 2009.

As a result of our monitoring and prevention policies, including education and surveillance, we have among the lowest rates of C-difficile infection in Canada and have seen a significant decline in Staphylococcus infection known as MRSA over the last number of years.

Mr. Speaker while we will continue to work on improving health prevention initiatives with our health care system, I want to strongly encourage all residents to make a habit of regular hand washing. This simple, yet effective action can help prevent the spread of illness such as influenza, norovirus, and many more serious communicable diseases.

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.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement, and I congratulate him on his new role as the Minister of Health. I am looking forward to working with him in this, obviously, very important portfolio.

This seems to be a very simple thing that we hear about all the time: wash your hands, wash your hands; but I do not think we can drill it into people's heads enough of how much this simple action of washing your hands can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases and infections.

We see the signs out there, we see them in hospitals, we see them in schools, and I think we need to continue on with that. I note that our rates are still amongst the lowest in Canada and that is a good sign, but we need to do more to eradicate this altogether. This simple act that takes only a few seconds can help stop the spread of what can be deadly infections.

I think we need to start with our youth. I take my three-year-old, for example, and we have started him in that routine of washing your hands all the time. Sometimes we are like a drill sergeant, but I think we need to start with youth and we have to continue forming these habits and creating them and spreading them. As they continue into adulthood, once they have these strong habits, it is only going to help prevent what could be an easily avoided infection.

I appreciate the time, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement, and congratulations to the minister on

his new portfolio. I, too, look forward to working with him.

Hand washing is an excellent preventative health care measure, and I congratulate our health care workers who have this growing success in reducing infection. I hope this government will not stop there. Ensuring that people have access to home care based on need will also contribute greatly to ensuring hospitals are not overcrowded unnecessarily and providing free glucose strips and providing the insulin pump to adults over twenty-five so people can afford to manage their diabetes and avoid more serious complications that end in preventable hospital admissions is an important thing.

To provide a more comprehensive adult –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

Oral Questions

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, last week the public became aware that government released Humber Valley Paving from an \$18 million paving contract for the Trans-Labrador Highway.

I ask the minister: Now that you claim to be an open government, will you provide a copy of the contract that Humber Valley Paving was released from?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the department, I guess, our number one initiative is to make sure that we provide a service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we get contracts finished on time and on budget. The contract that we had released with the particular contractor in question here today, once the tender was awarded, that was a public document. So there

is no problem at all for the Opposition at any time to get hold to that contract.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister said that Humber Valley Paving submitted a request to be released from the paving contract on March 13, 2014.

I ask the minister: How was this request submitted? Again, now that you claim to be an open government, will you provide us with a copy of that particular documentation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again, within the Department of Transportation and Works, when we award contracts to any tender we keep a very close contact with the contractors. Our objective is to make sure that tenders and contracts are done efficiently, effectively, on time and on budget. We have constant contact and conversation with all contractors during the process of a contract after it is awarded. What we do then – in this particular case, there were constant conversations with the contractor. We monitor throughout the contract being fulfilled. What we did in this case is that we had to –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister, how was the request submitted on March 13, 2014, and will you provide us with a copy of that particular documentation?

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

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, what we do is we keep constant contact with the contractors. Last year, Mr. Speaker, was a very difficult year –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: Last year, Mr. Speaker, was a very difficult year with unforeseen circumstances that nobody had any control over, government or the contractor in this case. Of course, what I am talking about here, Mr. Speaker, mostly is the forest fires that were throughout Labrador, especially in Labrador West and spreading into Eastern Labrador which closed down the highway for an extended period of time. This caused unforeseen delays, as well as extra expenses to the contractor. The contractor then in March approached, and I will continue when he asks the next question.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the same question again.

The contract was released March 13, 2014. I ask, how was the request submitted and will you provide us with a copy of that documentation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will pick up where I left off the last time. We were approached then in March by the contractor. Of course, the first objective from my perspective as the Minister of Transportation and Works is to get that contract finished on time and on budget.

We were into verbal conversations with the contractor and then we had to make a decision. Do you enter into a negotiation to let them out of the contract? We could have said no and held them to the contract. We put all of the options on the table. What we felt the best thing to do for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador was to sit down and see what the best options were that we had.

Again, I will continue on the next question.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, there was a request submitted on March 13.

I ask the minister very simply: Will he release that documentation, yes or no?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we were into verbal conversations then with the contractor. What I, as the minister, had to decide then was, what were the options that I had?

First and foremost, I wanted the contract finished on time and on budget. Secondly, I wanted to protect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the employment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Thirdly, I did not want to see a Newfoundland and Labrador company that since 1996 has been providing very good professional service to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – we have been very pleased with the work they have been doing.

I was left with a very small window of opportunity. I sat down and I felt that the best option in order to get the work done was to enter into a contract –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, it is apparent we are not going to get a copy of that document. I note the minister said he was in verbal conversation with somebody from the company.

I ask the minister: Who were you speaking to about this matter?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we sat down then and there was a mutual agreement between the contractor, in this case Humber Valley Paving, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that the best option in order to get the work done on time, on budget, protect the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: – citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, protect jobs for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and to ensure that a company that has provided a very good professional service within Newfoundland and Labrador with this government since 1996, that we did not jeopardize the future of that company. There was a small window of opportunity to retender the work with other work within Labrador.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Prior to the decision on March 13 to revoke this contract – or renege on the contract – who were you in conversations with?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will pick up where I left off there.

Then there was a mutual agreement between the contractor and the government, a small window of opportunity to be able to bundle that sixty kilometre piece of work with a much larger piece of work, an eighty kilometre piece of work in Eastern Labrador on the Trans-Labrador Highway. As well as a piece of work within Hamilton River Road in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and a small section on the eastern side of the Trans-Labrador Highway, about three kilometres that has chip seal that has to be redone. By bundling all of that work together, along with the sixty kilometres, we felt and still

feel the best decision was to bundle it together to get the work guaranteed to be done on time, on budget, this season, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated that he is not going to release any of the documentation, he is not going to tell us who he talked to, and we are talking about millions of dollars of taxpayer money.

Will the minister confirm that you will not release the information or who you spoke to with Humber Valley Paving about this?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, we felt that was the best decision at the time, still feel that in order to get the work done on time, on schedule, on budget, was to bundle it together. The people we talked to – and I will say unequivocally that at no time have I ever had a conversation, as the Minister of Transportation and Works, at no time have I ever had a conversation with Frank Coleman concerning Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The people I spoke with were the people that at the time represented the contractor, in this case Humber Valley Paving, and there were verbal conversations from March 13. Then my senior officials, on March 21, entered into an agreement to terminate the contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: When was the first communication, formal or informal, written or verbal, between the government and Humber Valley Paving about the cancellation of this contract?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite announced in his preamble earlier, it was on March 13 that the company had first approached government to enter into a verbal conversation to move forward to make a decision whether or not there could be a mutual agreement that termination of the contract would be in the best interest of the government, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as the contractor in question here now. That was on March 13.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Prior to March 13, 2014, did the minister ever discuss this with the Premier?

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 many conversations with the Premier as well as the Cabinet and caucus, and verbal conversations. I will not say that I did not have a conversation with the Premier concerning this because, as I said, I have conversations almost on a daily basis, especially with Cabinet. There is no written documentation as there was not with Humber Valley Paving. On March 13 they approached us to see if we could have a discussion, whether or not it was possible to move into negotiations to terminate this contract. On March 21, because of the window of opportunity I had to bundle this with another tender, my senior officials agreed to terminate the contract.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Just to confirm, Mr. Speaker, the minister did discuss this matter with the Premier prior to March 13.

I ask the minister: Was this a departmental or Cabinet decision to cancel the contract?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, this was strictly a departmental decision. I sat with my senior officials. We had to make a decision. The urgency I felt from a government perspective here, as well as a business perspective, was that we needed to act faster. We had a very small window because we were about to send out a tender for the other eighty kilometres and the five kilometres to be retendered. If we did not move that and bundle it together, then I did not feel that sixty kilometres would be done on schedule and on budget. I think we made the right decision to get that work done by the end of this summer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister states he did discuss this with the Premier and that this was a departmental decision, however.

I ask the minister: Do all departments discuss their decisions with the Premier prior to making them or do they usually happen strictly within departments?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for other departments, but I will guarantee you that as part of being an open government and as part of being a communicative government, I certainly discuss many issues as a minister of the Crown with the Premier, who actually governs this whole government. I would think it would be responsible that you do have conversations with the leader of your party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to releasing Humber Valley Paving from the paving contract, government did not call the bond associated with this contract.

I ask the minister: Now that you claim to be an open and accountable government, will you release a copy of the bond?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question because after listening to the political spin that was put on bonds when it comes to how a bond works – and I heard members of the Opposition announce publicly that a bond of \$9.5 million could have been held back from the contractor in question and spent in an Opposition's district.

Mr. Speaker, how a bond works, and the bonding agency works, is that a bond is the same as an insurance policy. A bond is put in place. There is not actually \$9.5 million in cash sitting there and you can decide whether you are going to keep it or not. It is an insurance policy. Many of us, I would hope, pay insurance on different things.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister a simple question. I will ask him again.

Will you release a copy of the bond, yes or no?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the bond is an insurance policy that quite often is part of – when a contract is awarded the bonds are necessary. Those insurance policies are put in place, and once a contract is mutually agreed upon to be terminated, well then all bonds or pieces of documentation that are referred or related to that contract, they are also terminated, Mr. Speaker.

It is very easy for the Opposition to access that. As I said, once this tender was awarded, any documentation that went with that contract that was being awarded was public knowledge also. He is more than welcome to go on site and get that.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind members that the Speaker acknowledges one speaker at a time, and only one speaker should be on their feet at any one time.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: What kind of bond did Humber Valley Paving have in place that government did not release? Was it a labour materials bond that was not released, a performance bond, or both?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the bonds that are related to any contract – in this case the performance bonds, they are related to that particular contract. Once there was a mutual agreement to terminate the contract with this particular contractor, any issues, any bonds that were related to the contract, they also are terminated. As I said, that would be public knowledge, Mr. Speaker. Whenever they want to go on the Web site, they are more than welcome to access that information. It is already public knowledge.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will ask the minister again: Did he not call the performance bond in addition to the labour and materials bond? Both of those bonds, I am assuming, were in place for Humber Valley Paving.

I am asking the minister: Were both bonds released back to the company without being called?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, when the contract was mutually agreed upon to terminate the contract then all bonds that were related to that particular contract also terminate.

It was not in the best interest of government to call in the bonds. Had we called in the bonds – my first and most important objective in this whole issue was to get the job completed, the sixty kilometres completed on schedule, and to get it completed on budget.

The most sensible thing when I sat down with my senior officials was to bundle that sixty kilometres with another large tender I had coming out in that very near future. There was a small window of opportunity. Had I kept the bonds or called in the bonds, Mr. Speaker – and I will repeat on the next question.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I cannot see how it would not be in the best interest of government to call a bond on a tender that was not completed.

I ask the minister: Would either of the bonds that were not called have provided any protection to creditors if the bond had been called?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is a good question again by the member from the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. Again, if it would help the member from the Opposition and he would like a briefing on how bonds work and the bonding agency, I would be more than happy to have my department give him a briefing as to how the bonding agency works.

A bonding agency and the bonds that are related to a contract, as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, is an insurance policy. It is not a matter of having the \$9.5 million bond and being able to spend it whichever way you want. What happens between private industry and another private industry, government, and the bonding agency has nothing to do with that.

Had we called in those bonds, what we would have had to do – there is a process that you have to go through. I would have jeopardized getting the project done on time.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I will ask the minister: If he had called the bond, would it have provided – either of the bonds, the labour and materials or the performance bond. Would either of those bonds, had they been called, provided any protection to creditors that are looking for money?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, if I had called in the bonds I would not have gotten the job done on time and on budget. The job would have been delayed to go through the bonding agency process which could be very lengthy. It could lead to litigation.

Once you call in a bond, the bonding agency then has to do research and see, were there

circumstantial reasons that would suffice the company, or the contractor in this case, saying it was not in the best interest of the company to stay within this contract? Government and the contractor in this particular case mutually agreed it was in the best interest of the Province and the best interest of getting the job done on time and on budget that we terminate the project. In order to terminate the project, we also (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister previously stated that he did not call the bond, claiming that it would cause Humber Valley Paving to suffer. Mr. Speaker, there are many suppliers and small businesses that cannot afford to suffer a loss should they not be able to collect on outstanding debts of Humber Valley Paving.

I ask the minister: What measures has government taken to ensure that the suppliers and other creditors will not suffer because they are not able to collect the money that they are owed?

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

MR. MCGRATH: Again, Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the Member for St. John's South does not understand how the bonding agency works. Government –

SOME HON. MEMBER: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has acknowledged the Minister of Transportation and Works for an answer.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again, as I was saying, it is obvious that the Member for St. John's South does not understand how the bonding agencies work and government does not get involved in financial issues from one private enterprise to another; that is not how we govern. What we did in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and

Labrador, the best opportunity to get this project completed and on budget, was the decision that we made.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when a bond is issued guarantors provide a promise to pay if a company defaults on its contract.

I ask the minister: Who were the bond guarantors for the contract and will he provide the documentation for these guarantors?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it was in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that the decision that we made, we made it on the premise that we wanted to get the job done on time and we wanted to get the job done on budget. We did not want to risk Newfoundlanders and Labradorians losing on employment, and I did not see any issues in jeopardizing a company that since 1996 has done very good work, very professional, work with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In order to move forward and get this job done on time and on budget, I think we made a very sound decision in terminating that and getting it retendered. The bonds then, once we terminated the project, the bonds also terminated.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will ask the minister again very pointed, very directly: Can he provide us with a list of the guarantors for the bond for this contract?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again, I say that the information would be public information; they are more than welcome to go and look up the tender. All of the obligations that go with that tender are public information. They are more than welcome to look that up.

Again, my objective as the minister, when this decision was being made, was the people of Newfoundland and Labrador getting the job done on time, on schedule, on budget, and protecting the employment of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. There was a small window of opportunity here. I had the other tenders almost ready to go out on the eighty kilometres and the five kilometres in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. By bundling these tenders together, government feels we will get a much better price and still be on budget.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. John's South, for a quick question without preamble.

MR. OSBORNE: Is Frank Coleman a guarantor, yes or no?

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

MR. MCGRATH: Again, Mr. Speaker, as I said unequivocally, never – never – have I had as the Minister of Transportation and Works a conversation with Mr. Frank Coleman concerning this issue. We dealt with the contractor themselves on any conversations we had.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Humber Valley Paving payback stinks –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: – to sum it up. Right or wrong, some members of the public suspect an impropriety has occurred.

In the interest of clearing the air, will the minister ask the Auditor General to take a look at this matter?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I extend the invitation. When I extended an invitation –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I extended an invitation to the Opposition, I also extend an invitation to the Third Party, if they want to step in. The Auditor General can come in and audit any time he wants to any issue that happens in the government. What the Auditor General does I have no control over.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very open decision I have made and I stand by my decision. I think it was the best decision for the people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, we have all the power in this House to be able to bring in the Auditor General, as was done already back in 2007. When the cable deal came forth, the House of Assembly asked the Auditor General to look at it. He was asked to look into the

controversial fibre optic deal. He found no wrongdoing and the deal went ahead.

I ask the minister: Why would he not want to clear the air on this matter?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me clarify for the member from the Third Party, I have no air to clear. I think I made a very sound decision, a decision in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the best decision for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in this case the best decision in the benefit of a contractor. If the Auditor General wants to investigate that, he is more than welcome, and I have no say in that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, I say that it might be a good decision for him and maybe for his department, but it is not the best decision that he has made on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the taxpayers, who want some clarity on this matter. They want the air cleared, plain and simple.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please give this House other examples where government released companies from their contractual obligations without penalty?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder: Is the member from the Third Party suggesting that it would be in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians not to have this contract for the sixty kilometres completed? I feel the decision I made gives the best

opportunity for this sixty kilometres to be completed.

I wonder, if the Third Party, while they were asking that question, had they done the research on the tender that is out now to close on May 14, he would be able to answer that question himself and realize that there was another contractor where there was a mutual agreement between the contractor and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that is actually retendered in the tender that is out to close on May 14 –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe it. They still do not think on the government side that there are no implications to not clearing the air to the Newfoundland and Labrador taxpayer. I do not understand why, through a motion of this House even, if you wanted to bring in the Auditor General and put in a formal request, that it could not be done as it was in 2007. I would like the minister to explain that.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member from the Third Party has done his research – because as I just stated, in the tender that is out now to close on May 14, his question was: Can you give examples of other contractors where there was a mutual agreement to terminate a contract? Had he done his research, he would realize that within the 145 kilometre tender that is scheduled to close on May 14, there is another contract that was terminated in November 2013 that there was no talk about at all, and that is retendered now. So I wonder: Is there political posturing and that is why we are up here in the House of Assembly today talking about what happened?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, I do not call looking after the taxpayers' money in this Province, the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, the people who give you the money to spend in the first place, as being that.

Mr. Speaker: What implications does this have now for the future contractors who are going to be posting bonds in this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, he says he does not call it exactly that. Well that is exactly what I do call it, political posturing, because when the contract was terminated in November there was absolutely no word.

Here we are today with the exact same tender, retendering two projects. One was mutually terminated in November, 2013; a second contract was terminated on March 21, 2014. There was never an issue, never a word about a contract being mutually terminated between the contractor and the government until it was in what they thought – what the Opposition and the Third Party thought would be in their political best interest to try and smear what this government thought was in the best interest, and still thinks is in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to get a project –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, to get a contract finished on time, on budget, and protects the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, group homes in Burin, Grand Falls-Windsor, and Stephenville were successfully caring for youth for years with very well-trained staff, some with decades of experience. These homes submitted proposals to government to continue their good work.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Who made the decision to not accept their proposals?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, one of the homes mentioned is in my district. I recognize the work that these people have done over the years and the service they have provided to the youth of our Province. Through the Auditor General's recommendation, an RFP was called and tenders were awarded according to those RFPs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What was the role of Deloitte in making these decisions?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, all I can say in response to the member's question was that through the Auditor General an RFP was put out. The proponents who won out in this one are recognized quality child service providers. As such, that decision has been made.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

In accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meeting held on March 13, 2014.

Also, under section 37 of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act the Commissioner of Legislative Standards conducted an inquiry into the conduct of the Member for Gander for the alleged contraventions of the House of Assembly Code of Conduct.

Under section 38 of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act the Commissioner of Legislative Standards delivered his report to me, as the Chairperson of the Management Commission of the House of Assembly, and this report has been distributed to the members of the Management committee. In accordance with 38(1) of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, I am hereby tabling the report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards into the conduct of the Member for the District of Gander.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice of the following private member's resolution, moved by me, the Member for Bonavista North.

WHEREAS the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans in allocating quotas for Northern shrimp this year has reduced the allocations for the inshore fleet disproportionately by adopting a last in, first out policy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House calls on the Government of Canada to eliminate the last in, first out, LIFO, policy of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and to instead distribute more equitably the Northern shrimp quota allocations based on adjacency and historical dependence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, to add to the previous motion, to serve notice that the motion provided by the member will be seconded by the Member for Humber Valley and Leader of the Opposition, as well as the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi and Leader of the Third Party in the House.

I further serve notice that the motion just read in will be the private member's motion that we will debate this coming Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Answers to Questions –

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: I am sorry. I thought you were still calling.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 6, 2014.

Further, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 6, 2014.

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

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand on a petition today concerning the hospital in Corner Brook.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here today from people from Massey Drive, from Humbermouth, Humber Heights, Petries. There are so many people, Mr. Speaker. It was even on the back of the – all over, there is Golden Globe, O'Connell Drive.

Mr. Speaker, there is some good news for the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador and parts of Central in the last little while. It is that there will be a radiation unit and a PET scanner at the hospital in Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I just find it pretty strange. I have to give the action committee, Israel Hann, Gerald Parsons, Wayne Rose, and a lot of the members on the committee credit also for supporting this and taking it to a new level.

I just find it very strange that we hear the former Minister of Health out talking about you cannot have it because the numbers are not there – back on March 28 or 29, or April 1, at that time. Now

we hear the Premier of the Province saying we are not going to put one, but we may put two in there. We may put two in there. Some of his comments was people from Central can avail of these services also. I think it is good news for Western Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I have to remind people of in Western Newfoundland, and they can rest assured that I am going to keep vigil on this matter. The same Premier who announced there is going to be a radiation unit, a PET scanner at the hospital in Corner Brook in the last little while, is the same Premier, when he was minister at the time, stood up in 2011 and said construction of the new hospital will start in 2012, knowing full well there was not even a design for the building.

I am not saying it is not going to be done, but I am just saying on past history you have to remain vigil. I say to the action committee, I am going to start presenting petitions. I am going to start presenting information because the information I presented before was all false until four days ago, when all of a sudden now we are having two machines.

I am going to talk about ultrasounds. I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the ultrasounds are going to be cut from six to three. The wait time is going to go from 147 days to 350 days.

Last year I was told I did not know what I was talking about, about radiation and PET scanners. Guess what? I was proven right. I will be proven right about the ultrasounds. The action committee also will stay vigilant on this here because we cannot have a cut in services to make room for this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to women's groups all over the Province, women's groups who deal with issues of domestic violence, women's groups who are experts in this area. I have spoken to police. I have spoken to officials of the courts. I have spoken to prosecutors; I have spoken to defence counsel. I have spoken to members from Child, Youth and Family Services, as well as victims, offenders, and community agencies. Everybody is saying that the Family Violence Intervention Court was integral and was an important part of working on the issue of family violence. It was a key element in solving the issues of domestic violence.

There is no good reason this government has yet stated as to why they closed the Family Violence Intervention Court. Five hundred and twenty thousand people in this Province and the court was \$520,000 a year. That is \$1 per citizen. How much money was wasted on Humber Valley Paving? How much money went down the drain there that belonged to the taxpayers of this Province, money that could have been spent on the Family Violence Intervention Court? That was simply tossed out the window and forgiven.

How much money is spent every day, every single day, on Muskrat Falls?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: Every single day, millions of dollars – millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker – and we are talking about \$500,000 to save the lives of women and children in this Province. This government has obviously lost its way in the area of family violence.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of issues here. It is a smaller school and from my experience, because I have a smaller school in my district, I firmly believe that they provide a greater level of education because of the relationship between the parents and the teachers, and especially between the teachers and the children, and the fact that the teachers know all of the children by name. The school itself has a feeling of community.

Generally speaking, I would say that smaller schools, where there is a greater one-on-one level of support for the students, would tend to have a higher grade point average than some of the larger super schools and the super structures. I understand and I realize that the super schools, Mr. Speaker, provide additional amenities, additional lab equipment and so on, but you do tend to lose that personal feeling that you have in a smaller school.

On top of that, we have the issue of all-day Kindergarten that is going to be put in place. When it was determined that Holy Cross Elementary was going to close, all-day Kindergarten was not a reality. The children from Holy Cross are now supposed to go to St. Theresa's School. I would contend that if we are going to have all-day Kindergarten then throughout the City of St. John's the number of Kindergarten classes is going to double; therefore, we are going to need additional space.

I ask government to reconsider the issue of closure of Holy Cross Elementary with that in mind. On top of the fact as the parents say in this petition they were promised neighbourhood schools, Mr. Speaker and this is a neighbourhood school. For some of the children to be bused to St. Theresa's, the new school to be constructed certainly is not the

neighbourhood school. That is not the concept of education reform when that was voted on in this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I spent yesterday afternoon in Trout River, and you will recall that I have presented this petition on a few occasions – in fact, on more than a few occasions – and the evidence of the shortfall in cellphone service and the fact that Trout River does not have cellphone service could not have been more borne out than yesterday when I was leaving Trout River.

Twenty kilometres back from Trout River in Woody Point, I came across a vehicle with somebody in it, and that person was from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The person from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans was the security person dispatched to secure the whale that is ashore. Of course, the person is a security guard for DFO, cannot use his cellphone from Trout River, so he has got to stand guard over the eighty-one foot long blue whale which is in Trout River and is quite a conversation piece, then he has got to drive back twenty kilometres so he can report in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. J. BENNETT: So, Mr. Speaker, how bizarre is it that we would have in a major national park in our Nation, a community with 600 or 700 people, a community that the entire focus of the world has been drawn to in the last few weeks, was the whale having gone ashore with the media coverage, with the Royal Ontario Museum making an agreement with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to see if they can acquire the whale and put it on display. People will be looking to Trout River, and what is the one thing that they are not going to have, all of the scientists who come and stay in Trout River in order to be able to generate maybe as much as a couple of year's work locally? They will not be able to use their cellphone.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that the Royal Ontario Museum probably will be well advised to do, I guess they should rent a house or something so they can get a telephone installed, because we know there is no cellphone available for them. What kind of a black eye is that for our Province that we cannot even extend cellphone service to such a place?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I guess like my colleague, the Member for St. Barbe, this petition follows both of our districts and also would transcend to the traffic that would be going to Labrador with the Strait of Belle Isle ferry crossing.

As well, we look at having advanced transportation and telecommunication networks as key. We have the Strait of Belle Isle cable crossing and drilling happening in the Shoal Cove, Pines Cove area where there is heavy equipment working right now, and the road in that area is one of the worst sections. You have a lot of development happening there in pertaining to the Muskrat Falls Project, yet we are seeing our basic infrastructure being eroded. That will have a significant impact on other transportation of goods and services, on our tourism economy where we have a UNESCO heritage site in L'Anse aux Meadows, as well as another UNESCO heritage site that goes to Red Bay, and then there is one just near the Trout

River area in Gros Morne National Park that is being talked about.

It is all interlinked when we look at infrastructure, when we look at our road infrastructure and when we look at our telecommunications infrastructure. It is time government look at making investment, do some resurfacing, do some repairs in this section of primary highway for the good of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to intercede in the matter and advise Eastern Waste Management to

withdraw the proposal and find a more suitable location for this waste recovery facility.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have presented this petition now a number of times. It actually started out, for me, when I was contacted by some people in my district who actually own cabins and summer homes in Peak Pond-Reids Pond, and so on. Since that time, I have spoken to some permanent residents up there. This has actually grown now from beyond simply the cabin owners to people in the general area who have concerns over this site.

Today on my petition I have people here from Old Shop. Of course, there is Mount Pearl and St. John's. South Dildo, Blaketown, and Whiteway are some of the different communities that are represented here today.

Mr. Speaker, as is indicated in the petition and as I indicated before, this whole process, this whole plan to put a waste recovery facility in that area, was done without any consultation with people in the area, any of the cabin owners, or any of the permanent residents. They were not even given the opportunity to even know it was on the go. They had to read *The Telegram* or something one day or something in the media to even find out about it, which in itself is problematic.

Since that time, there was an environmental assessment process, which was supposed to have been completed a couple of weeks ago but it has not been for some reason. I am not sure. Residents still have not had an opportunity to give their input.

The bottom line is we all recognize the need for such a facility. There are eight other facilities across the Island, transfer sites and so on. I think we all agree they are needed. It is all about the location and this is certainly not a suitable one.

I will continue to present petitions on behalf of these people until it is changed.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call, as per Standing Order 32, we move into Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: A motion for Orders of the Day has been called.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, a reminder in advance, so I do not forget, for members. At 6:00 p.m. today in the House, the Government Services Committee will meet to review the Estimates of the Department of Transportation and Works and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

Further, Mr. Speaker, a reminder of tomorrow, May 6, Tuesday, the Social Services Committee will meet in the House at 9:00 a.m. to review the Estimates of the Department of Justice, Attorney General, and the Labour Relations Agency.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend Various Acts Of The Province Respecting The Publication Of A Summary Of A Decision Or Order Of An Adjudication Tribunal, Bill 8, and that the said bill be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend Various Acts Of The Province Respecting The Publication Of A Summary Of A Decision Or Order Of An Adjudication Tribunal, Bill 8, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 8, and that the said bill be now read a first time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend Various Acts Of The Province Respecting The Publication Of A Summary Of A Decision Or Order Of An Adjudication Tribunal", carried. (Bill 8)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend Various Acts Of The Province Respecting The Publication Of A Summary Of A Decision Or Order Of An Adjudication Tribunal. (Bill 8)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MR. KING: On tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: On tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 8 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Order 2, third reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, Bill 9, I move, seconded by the Minister of

Environment and Conservation, that the said bill be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and that the title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 9)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Motion 1 has been called, the Budget Speech. Does anyone want to stand and be recognized to speak to it?

AN HON. MEMBER: It is a vote.

MR. SPEAKER: We are going to vote on the sub-amendment? Oh, I am sorry.

You have heard the motion.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: I want to remind members now we have just disposed of the sub-amendment, and we are now going back to the amendment.

I am acknowledging the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, speaking to the amendment.

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to stand in my place in the House today to talk to Budget 2014-2015, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to split my time from talking about my own district in regard to what that Budget means to my district, and also to my department.

I will start off essentially with my district. Over the last couple of weeks or so, I and a couple of other ministers have made some major announcements in regard to my district, which were well received. I look back at Gander back in 2003, previous to 2003, going back really to 1999.

I have referenced in this House previously as well, Mr. Speaker, that I have three children, three girls. I am quite proud of the three girls. Back around 1999, 2000, 2001, I never thought that either one of them would live in Gander. I thought that neither one of them would live in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, because we did have a bleak future back then. People were moving and doing all kinds of things in regard to seeking a productive life. I did not think they would for a minute, but things have changed, Mr. Speaker.

One of the fastest growing communities in Eastern Canada, next to Paradise, probably, is the Town of Gander, with about 120 to 130, 140 new houses built each and every year for the last five years or so. Our population is increasing as I speak, to be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, because each and every time I go back to Gander

somebody else is building a house in one of the subdivisions in Gander as well.

That is one of the reasons why we, as a government, have invested heavily in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have invested in schools. We have invested in health. We have invested in education. We have invested in enabling people to go back to school, to seek a skilled trade. We have enabled people to go to Memorial University and not incur the debt that they had incurred in the past. We have invested in our future, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly what we have done over the last ten or eleven years. Especially since 2005, we have invested heavily in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be the MHA for Gander. I am very proud to be able to work with all the different stakeholders in my communities, the various councils, and also the chambers of commerce and any of the other stakeholders. The non-for-profits that we have out there too, Mr. Speaker. We work well together and we have achieved a lot over the last number of years.

I want to reference the schooling system in Gander. Gander Collegiate has been totally redeveloped over the last number of years. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Education saw fit to redevelop the parking lot between St. Paul's and the collegiate last year which was really welcomed by both the faculty and the students as well.

As a matter of fact, it was only this week past that I met the principal of Gander Collegiate. He referenced how it has actually enabled them to cut down on their overall maintenance cost in that particular school as well because the mud and the dirt is not coming into the school and that kind of stuff, and destroying some of the things they had there, Mr. Speaker.

St. Paul's has been expanded, Mr. Speaker, and redeveloped as well. We have announced that in past budgets. It is all investments in education.

I had the privilege last year of announcing, and then also announcing that we will start site work and hopefully get some steel onsite in regard to the new four to six school in Gander as well. We had to pick a site. We had to swap some

land with the Town of Gander too in regard to obtaining that site. So that took a little while to get the particular legal documents and legal process finished, Mr. Speaker, but right now we should be starting site work in the next few weeks or so.

As well, in this Budget the planning money is there in regard to the new K-3 school. Both schools will probably be in the vicinity of between \$40 million and \$45 million, or \$48 million once done. The old Gander Academy school was built in 1957. It certainly does not meet the needs of the students today, Mr. Speaker. I am so proud I was able to work with all of the stakeholders to establish and have funded two new schools for the District of Gander, which has a growing young population base, young students, and I encourage people to look at Gander as a place to live. It is a great place to bring up a family. I moved there back in the early 1970s, saw that and never looked back, Mr. Speaker. It is my home.

Mr. Speaker, over the last while, as a matter of fact, I know the airport has commissioned a study to downsize the particular footprint of the airport terminal. I understand why they are doing that because aviation has really changed over the last number of years and whatnot, but with that came a bit of criticism in regard to that downsize. People have to understand that aviation has changed. The City of St. John's has changed and the traffic load has changed as well. The airport terminal has given the airport authority some challenges in regard to the overall maintenance costs, operational costs, et cetera. They are going to have a look at that and see how much of it they can incorporate in the new plan and whatnot.

I saw some things out there in the social media. I am not on social media myself but it was brought to my attention that people were questioning in regard to politicians being involved in the Gander airport and what they have said in the past and how important that piece of infrastructure is to the Town of Gander. Well, it absolutely is, and we have been involved as a government. That is why we invested over \$3 million in a \$10 million project to redevelop the main runway in Gander. That is the reason why we invested in Garrett Drive, an intricate piece of infrastructure connecting

the business park to the airport. It was in deplorable condition and we invested in that as well.

That is the reason why, Mr. Speaker, we invested in new water bombers because everybody in this House realizes that the water bomber base, government air services is located in Gander. It has been located there for many, many years. These people do some great things for this Province, take great risks, especially when they are fighting fires as was seen in Lab West last year with massive fires, and they do that kind of thing. They should have the equipment that they absolutely need. So two water bombers in the tune of \$75 million is being purchased. As a matter of fact, one is going to be delivered pretty soon or probably is delivered.

Also, as well, we announced a new hangar in Gander which will establish the headquarters for government air services at the airport in Gander for ever and a day. They require that too, because they are operating out of hangars that were built back in the 1940s and 1950s. This will bring them up to standard as well. That hangar will cost anywhere between \$30 million and \$40 million.

The hospital in Gander, the James Paton Memorial Hospital, will be celebrating fifty years this month, Mr. Speaker. I may not be able to get to that celebration myself because I think it is going to be held during the session of the House of Assembly, and I understand the rules of the House that I cannot be out of the House in regard to district work. I regret that I might not be there, but my heart, my soul, and my congratulations go out to not only the staff of the James Paton Memorial Hospital currently, but also all the staff who made that James Paton Memorial Hospital what it is today in the past, Mr. Speaker. I started out my career as well in the James Paton Memorial Hospital. I did a couple of internships there in the pharmacy.

As well, over the last years, especially under the guidance of the past Minister of Health, the MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans, I believe, we invested heavily in the James Paton Memorial Hospital in both equipment and the redevelopment. She helped me announce about three weeks or so ago \$16 million for the James

Paton Memorial Hospital that will finish that redevelopment completely. In essence, then, I would end up with a brand-new hospital in Gander, which has been developed over the last number of years, up to standard and has some of the best equipment in Eastern Canada, too, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, I was at the airport in St. John's. I was talking to a gentleman who I had not seen for many, many years, in fact a colleague of mine in my past life, a pharmacist. He sat down with me up at the airport and we were just chatting about Newfoundland and Labrador today as compared to 2003. You cannot compare. You cannot compare Newfoundland and Labrador as it was in 2003. We did not and were not leading the country in regard to all economic indicators or most economic indicators out there. There was not the number of jobs and the opportunity there, as well. Memorial University was not what it was. The College of the North Atlantic was certainly not what it is today, as well as the total economy.

I also recognize that everybody does not achieve. That is the way society works. Everybody does not achieve in a democracy, but everybody has the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. Certainly right now in this Province, each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has the opportunity.

We had a good conversation about that. He brought the subject matter up to me and I had not seen him in a number of years. As a matter of fact, I would say it was probably about twenty or twenty-five years. I wanted to talk more about when we were in the early years of pharmacy, but he wanted to talk about Newfoundland and Labrador so we had that kind of a conversation.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, when he left to catch his flight, there was a young gentleman who was listening, unbeknownst to us, about the conversation. I would say that young gentleman was maybe twenty-three or twenty-four, probably even younger than that. He did not know who I was. He did not know who the other gentleman was.

When the other gentleman left, he said: I overheard your conversation. He said: I agree

with you. Even being as young as I am, I have noticed a difference in Newfoundland and Labrador. You are absolutely saying exactly what has happened in Newfoundland and Labrador since 2003 and I have opportunity. I am working here now on a kiosk, but I am only here on a temporary basis. He said: I am going to college and I have a great opportunity to make a life for myself here in this Province, where I would not have had it back in 2003.

That was comforting to me as a politician. That was comforting to me as a father. That was comforting to me as a Newfoundlander and Labradorian that a young person of that age is connected and recognized the investments and the things that this government has achieved over the last ten to eleven years, especially since 2005.

Last Thursday I had the fortunate aspect of spending an hour on Crosstalk, I believe the name of the show was in regard to apprentices. It was a very positive program. It was about an hour. We had a number of people phone in complimenting the programs that we have within government that support apprentices and support employers.

Some of the people who phoned in made suggestions and I took them as well, Mr. Speaker. One in particular, and I will read, it was a lady by the name of Sarah Watts-Rynard, an Executive Director of the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. She was there and she phoned in.

Here is exactly what she said, "Newfoundland is really out ahead when it comes to the wage subsidy, a much, much more generous wage subsidy for employers in Newfoundland than is available anywhere else across the country. A real effort to be able to help employers who want to hire and train apprentices to be able to financially do that. We know from our own research that there's a great business case for apprenticeship training and lots of reasons why employers should see the financial benefit of hiring and training apprentices. But at the same time that's still a key obstacle and it's really a place where Newfoundland is out ahead" of the rest of the country.

That is what we have done. Since the Skills Taskforce we as a government have invested over \$100 million in training. As a matter of fact, with the labour market training we have about \$39.8 million to continue to develop a skilled workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador. Fourteen thousand people in this Province avail of some type of funding from those programs. As a matter of fact, between ourselves and the federal government, we have a total of about \$163 million, \$164 million in regard to that fund. That is the way we support Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to enable them to train, enable them to educate themselves, enable them to seek the opportunity and avail of the opportunities in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

I am hoping and praying that more and more of them will make this their home, make this their home after Memorial University, which is another great investment in my department in regard to reducing debt to our students. Our tuition freeze, I think it is \$14.7 million we are going to invest – no, that is actually \$14.7 million over two years to complete the conversion of student loans to grants, Mr. Speaker. That was hailed by the students in general, and certainly by the Federation of Students as well, and it is a great investment because it is an investment in our future, Mr. Speaker. The tuition freeze is another \$5.1 million, I believe, in continuing that tuition freeze. So overall, in the tuition freeze, there is \$283 million invested by this government in our students since we first introduced that in 2005.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things in my department that I take not only a great interest, a great pride in as well, is the Income Support part of my department, the most vulnerable people in our Province. I said in this House and in interviews that we have a number of people in this Province who will require some type of Income Support all their lives, and that is an acceptable thing. There were not born with what I have, they were not born with what all of us in this House have, and they have challenges and they require support from us.

That is the reason why we invested \$4.8 million in this year's Budget to give them a 5 per cent increase in their basic rate, which is really absolutely important. These are the vulnerable

people of our Province and we have to recognize that when we are in an economy that we find ourselves in, we have to share that wealth, Mr. Speaker. If we are going to be a responsible government, if we are going to be a Province that people will look at with envy and also – I say this in thinking, Mr. Speaker, I go to a fair number of provincial-territorial meetings, I go to a fair number of federal-provincial-territorial meetings as well, and each and every one of those that I attend, some of the ministers, a lot of the ministers have conversations with me, and want to have conversations with me. They want to find out how we are doing things.

We are doing things different. They want to get and glean that information from us, from my officials, from me as a minister, where they can possibly support their people as well. I am not just talking about vulnerable people. I am talking about the people of the Province, and we have done that effectively and we have done it well. I will go back to my opening remarks, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot compare this Province today as it was in 2003. You cannot compare 2003 to now. We are living in a different Province today, a much better Province than we found it in 2003.

As a government, do we do everything right? Absolutely not! Do you do everything right? Absolutely not! We are all human beings and we do make mistakes. You are limited by your budgets and all that kind of stuff. Would you like to do everything? Absolutely, you would, but that is not possible. That is not possible in a household. That is not possible in a business. That is not possible in Memorial University. That is not possible in the College of the North Atlantic, because you live within a budget.

You only have so much money to go around. That is not possible for yourself. Absolutely not! You cannot decide as a young person that you want to go out every night and you are going to spend and you are going to spend and you are going to spend. You are going to run out of money. That is the way it works. We have tried to invest as wisely as we possibly can and make this Province a better place.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget was a great Budget. This Budget was a great Budget for Education.

This Budget was a great Budget for Advanced Education and Skills.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

I remind the hon. member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was great to speak to this Budget.

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought I was rising out of turn, apparently I am in turn.

Mr. Speaker, today in speaking to this matter I would like to address the issues that I have become familiar with in our Department of Justice and the Attorney General's Office over the past five or six months. I was privileged to be able to devote a significant amount of my time being appointed critic at the end of the year. To me, it seems like we have had a report on our prisons, which was called Decades of Darkness, and I think we could easily have a talk today about our Department of Justice and we could say a decade of neglect. We have had a decade of neglect in the Department of Justice.

First of all, in the broad strokes, what do we mean when we look at the Department of Justice and the Attorney General's office, which generally is overseen by one minister, but not so in this case? First of all, we see the one we are familiar with having the mandates, the various mandates that come under Justice. One is that people should feel safe and secure from violent crime, from being extorted, and from having people out on bail breaking into their homes. That is the one we see in the news media. That is the one that leaves us with the person we are being warned about is on the loose. The police are warning us up to a few hours ago. Do not approach this person. A woman who is on the loose breached some conditions, which means a prior offender, and apparently ran into somebody.

Then we look at another area of the Department of Justice, and that is providing access to the courts for people who have legal issues and legal problems. Mr. Speaker, quite often it seems to me that all of the attention, or most of the attention, is focused on the crime and punishment aspect of the Department of Justice without enough focus on other parts, the part of the Department of Justice which says people who have legal issues and people who have family law cases, and I am speaking about matrimonial matters, custody and access for children, and businesses that need to resort to the courts for legal matters, to have due process. In that area, we are absolutely bogged down in the courts with no idea of when that may lighten up.

To go on further with the Department of Justice and Attorney General's office, we look at risk management. Mr. Speaker, I have dealt with several lawyers at the Department of Justice, both on the civil side and on the criminal side. In my view, they do an outstanding job with the instructions they are given. Lawyers are accustomed to going to work because they have received instructions. That means they wait to be told what they are supposed to do on what cases, and that is done through a management team, but it comes from the minister. The minister represents the people who say: This is the policy we are going to pursue; this is what we want to accomplish. Then the people in the department carry out those instructions.

A third particular area on the civil side of the Department of Justice and the Attorney General's office, which is sorely lacking, is in loss prevention, risk management, providing advice, and providing opinions back to the government so that the government does not do things like expropriate paper mills that they should not expropriate inappropriately. This was an error. It was a bad move in the first place. It was stampeded through.

Then we see the Department of Justice ought to be able to provide advice on the civil side back to government over different issues that government comes up with so we do not get caught up into litigation, like class actions over runaway moose. We need to have a Department of Justice and Attorney General's office which is accountable. It provides almost as if it is a three-legged stool, and this is what the

Department of Justice and the Attorney General's office provides for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. If, in fact, that stool has three legs, they are three very wobbly legs from neglect and from lack of direction.

In the area which is crime and punishment, which I have said seems to be there, it gets the most media attention. There appears to be no focus whatsoever from this government as to what direction we are taking with respect to organized crime, violent crime, family crime, Aboriginal crime, white collar crime, any kind of crime. It is almost as if the Department of Justice by giving no instructions, they are not saying that – I can see two Crown prosecutors – if somebody comes before the court with a violent crime, then for certain you must oppose bail.

When I see a newspaper story which says somebody comes before the court who is arrested after a long time police investigation, consuming thousands and thousands of dollars in resources, and these people have over \$300,000 in cash, nine millimetre automatic weapons that are designed to be small, compact, and used as personal weapons of offence, generally, and when I see that in no time the person is out on bail. That means if the two lawyers, the defence counsel and the prosecuting counsel, come before the judge and they are content to let the person out, the judge has to assume they have made proper inquiries and investigations – if it means that person is sent back out on the street to commit more crime, more crime and more crime.

Mr. Speaker, every time I read a media release today and it says that such-and-such a person was arrested for impaired driving, a high-speed chase, an assault with a police officer, and then they say 'and breaches'. Well, Mr. Speaker, there are two kinds of breaches. One is a breach of probation which means the person is on probation and probably ought to be supervised better, or they have had a lapse. The other is generally a failure to comply with an order of the court, which is typically a breach of a bail condition. That means that the person is out. The person has been given the benefit of walking free with the presumption of innocence even though they are alleged to have committed

one offence, maybe two offences, or maybe multiple offences.

My colleague for Torngat Mountains has been looking at the number of breaches, and the number of charges. It is almost as if people who are involved in criminal activity are told well, we are going to give you better yet – it is going to be cheaper by the dozen. The more crime you do, the less time or fewer fines you are going to have to serve.

If we look at the collection of fines in the Province, it seems to be totally ignored, and totally forgotten about. The Auditor General some time ago made certain recommendations as to what steps could be taken in fine collection. Other provinces, for generally petty offenders, may have fine option provisions, which means a person can work off a fine if it is relatively low. This is a non-violent type of offender.

If a person is ordered to pay a fine and if they do not pay the fine, then they rack up fines that are \$10,000, \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000. We heard recently one which was much higher, but I understand that may have been an exception because there was a substantial tobacco fine involved in that one. The person may well have been paying and that was more than \$160,000.

If the person has racked up tens of thousands of dollars in fines, in my view that shows an absolute and utter contempt for the court. What does it say to a person who has committed a relatively minor infraction, maybe it is a driving infraction, and they have had not relatively nominal fines? How does it give the generally law-abiding citizen any comfort to say now you have a fine, Mr. Whatever, for, say, speeding and you have a \$200 or \$300 fine, but we are not going to bother to collect \$20,000 or \$30,000 of fines from somebody else? When you want to renew your driver's licence, you are going to pay this fine. Why is it that we do not pursue offenders of large amounts of fines? Why is it?

These people have not vanished; they are showing up regularly. Not only is it showing absolutely no regard for law and order and the administration of justice in causing a slippage in bringing the administration of justice into disrepute, it means that people are on our streets

who are driving unregistered, unlicensed motor vehicles, an absolute hazard to other members of the public. A very simple set of instructions to chase down those fines and give people their opportunity, and if they do not pay then – we may not imprison people any more for failing to pay fines; however, we do imprison people for contempt of court. If the person cannot demonstrate to a judge that they are making their best efforts to pay those fines, then for sure that can be seen as contempt of court and they can face yet another charge and incarceration.

Another of the issues I see having toured Her Majesty's Penitentiary, and I certainly encourage the minister to tour Her Majesty's Penitentiary and all of the prisons in the Province, is Her Majesty's Penitentiary was built in 1859. By way of comparison, I have earlier referred to Darwin having written his masterpiece, *On the Origin of Species*. Well, in the 1850s, the United States government also opened Alcatraz. Alcatraz was opened in the same decade as Her Majesty's Penitentiary in the then colony, ultimately Dominion, and now Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The prison is absolutely archaic, but even more so, one of the initiatives of government, which is not going very well, is that inmates are permitted to wear everyday street clothing inside. That is very ill advised. It is ill advised because the corrections officers know that people who wear street clothing in the prison for weekends or for any other use are astute of smuggling contraband. They can have pills sewn in seams. They can have various types of drugs sewn into clothing that goes inside the prison.

As was explained to me by somebody working in the prison only a few weeks ago, in addition to street clothing providing avenues for contraband, street clothing often is taken away, extorted, or stolen from the weaker inmates so that the stronger, heavy on the range, gets the street clothing. Then the person who lost the street clothing, maybe it is a \$250 jacket, reports it as stolen, and maybe it was sold for drugs on the inside, and the authorities inside our penitentiary then have to launch an investigation to find out what happened to this person's street clothing. If they cannot find it, then the taxpayers have to reimburse this inmate for street clothing that is lost inside of the prison.

Clearly some direction from the Minister of Justice on ceasing wearing of street clothing inside would solve a lot of issues on moving contraband and violence inside.

Less than a week ago I toured the most modern provincial prison in Canada. The South West Detention Centre has been built to house approximately 300 inmates, so it is roughly twice the size of Her Majesty's Penitentiary. In the South West Detention Centre, the inmates in that detention centre, the most modern one in Canada, they wear uniforms.

Not only do they wear uniforms, the South West Detention Centre has a wing for male inmates, a wing for female inmates so the female inmates with families primarily in the Northeast Avalon area, St. John's area, do not have to be shipped to Clarenville; they could just as easily be serving their time locally. The uniform for male inmates is orange overalls and the uniform for female inmates is track pants and a sweat shirt, and it is as simple as that. This is something that these very minor steps, at minimal cost, could improve the efficiencies of the prison system in this Province. We are not doing that.

Something else that they have that we have not even considered in our Province with roughly a 150-year-old prison is that they have a mental health wing. For people who are sentenced to prison, they can serve their time in a mental health wing. Because many people who commit offences and who are in prison have mental health issues, they also have an infirmary. They have an eight-unit infirmary so that, as was explained to me by one of the personnel who was kind enough to give me approximately a three-hour tour, if somebody gets sick and we are responsible for that person, that inmate, regardless of what offence they have committed – and this is not a federal penitentiary; this is a provincial prison for up to two years less a day.

The take on transporting someone to the hospital means two correctional officers – two guards and a driver are taken out of the system for one inmate to go to the hospital. If that inmate is kept in the hospital, you have to have two guards, twelve hours on and twelve hours off, to oversee that person. Yet if they have an infirmary – and they have multiple nurses, more than a dozen nurses working in the prison, and

we have one nurse practitioner. That is what we have in Her Majesty's Penitentiary.

The prison in Windsor, Ontario, the South West Detention Centre, it really was not built so much for the inmates; it was built more for the staff because the people who work in the prison work in conditions that if it were an industry, I am pretty certain it would not be allowed. I am pretty sure that somebody could not be hired at a company and say now you go down in the basement and you sit there for twelve hours and watch monitors with no daylight and no fresh air. That is the working conditions of people working in the prison. If people do not care about the inmates – I am not saying they do or they do not, but if they do not we should at least care about the staff who work at Her Majesty's Penitentiary.

Contraband is a significant issue. Some of the contraband issues include outsiders being able to throw drugs over the wall. Then people are able to acquire the drugs thrown over the wall, and this causes more trouble on the inside.

Another one of the issues that the Minister of Justice would do well to review is people who are doing temporary absences, intermittent sentences, also known as weekends. In my view, somebody should have to convince a judge that yes, I should be allowed to do my relatively short stretches on weekends. This could be fourteen days, thirty days, sixty days, whatever it happens to be, because right now it seems to be they are receiving this as a matter of right.

People who are doing weekends, now some people have stretched out weekends and say well, I am working on the weekend so I want to do my weekends in the middle of the week. That means that the people inside who we have heard are pretty much formed into a prison gang are able to say to people who are coming in: If you do not bring drugs into the institution, then you are going to be beat up. We know you are coming back in.

These people are put in the general prison population. There is another wing; quite often, it is overcrowded. I have toured the other wing in our penitentiary, but there should be no communication between people who are doing

the short stretches on weekends because people doing the short stretches bring in drugs and are coerced into bringing in drugs for the heavy-duty inmates on the inside.

Mr. Speaker, in preparing as Justice critic I have had the opportunity to review the press releases issued by this government for the last half dozen years. If the government had done all of the things that they said they were going to do over the last half dozen years, we would have a much better system. I believe that we would also be participating more fully in the Canadian Confederation.

For example, a half dozen or so years ago a former Minister of Justice was saying he was making representations to then Public Safety Minister, Stockwell Day, saying we want a 70-30 split on building a prison in our Province because there is not a federation institution. That seems to have fallen by the wayside and the Province is now building our own institution.

Another issue that a former Minister of Justice was taking up with the federal government is that we have never, ever had a Justice of the Supreme Court from this Province – to be appointed from this Province. Mr. Speaker, sixty-five years in Confederation and one-half dozen years ago the Minister of Justice said he was making representation so we could have one of our judges – and we have enough judges who are experienced enough and smart enough to serve on the Supreme Court of Canada.

It seems like government has given up on this entirely. It is as if, from time to time, they pump out a few press releases, a few feel-good press releases, and there is little to no follow-up. Certainly we should be entitled to participate on the bench of the Supreme Court of Canada. Given our smaller population, undoubtedly we will not get very many appointments.

Given that there is already a formula in place of the nine justices, three from Ontario, three from Quebec, two from the Prairies, and one from Atlantic, we would not expect to get very many judges. For sure after every sixty or seventy years, we should be allowed to have one judge in this Province on the Supreme Court of Canada. It would seem to make sense to me in

order for us to be able to participate more fully in the fabric of Canadian society.

Many of the issues that the Department of Justice could be dealing with to improve our society are significant. Many of them are large; many of them are smaller. This government has consistently withdrawn Provincial Court services from small rural communities. Mr. Speaker, they have done so on the Great Northern Peninsula, and they have done so on the Bonavista Peninsula. This means that people have to travel greater distances. These are people who are often unemployed looking for child support payments. They are trying to enforce their right in our Provincial Courts, in our provincial civil courts, yet government continues to downgrade and withdraw the services.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the last member say how far we have come. It seems to me we have also fallen further behind than we were ten years ago.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is great to rise today to speak to the amendment. It is like the news program we watch on Sundays and we have the three to watch. The first portion of this, the sub-amendment, has been voted down. Now we are talking to the amendment on this Budget. We will get into the third act to get back to the Budget debate itself.

I would just like to – as my first words on this Budget and the amendment – make a couple of comments about the first Budget of our new minister. From the travels around the Province and the talks she had with constituents and residents around the Province, the shared views that were shared with her and her committees and the other ministers who were doing the consultations in different parts of the Province, then we certainly listened to what was said to us through the last few months.

This Budget came about and has quite austere measures in it for this Province and is in quite capable hands. I would not want to refer to the fact that this new minister has huge shoes to fill. You know what shoes she would have to step into; she would probably get lost in them, in the sense of physical size. I will refer to her capable hands that this Budget and how it was brought in, how it is presented, and the themes in which she came in with shared prosperity, fair society, and balanced outlook towards our Province, then I am sure that through these actions this Budget was prepared by capable hands through her and her officials in her department.

Before I get right into the Budget, I do want to take just a moment, Mr. Speaker, to welcome the Member for Virginia Waters. I guess now I am the first to welcome her; she was brought into this House today. I hope she gets used to her seat, and that in the few days to come that we will hear much from her.

I would also refer to a new addition with regard to the Cabinet today, the Member for Terra Nova. His time has finally come and he stepped up to those ranks for Tourism, Culture and Recreation, and I am sure the job will be done quite well. In the next ranks behind, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, I would just like to congratulate her on her new role as well, and others who may have been in new roles since we left two short weeks ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: To look at this Budget, Mr. Speaker, again the themes from the Budget: shared prosperity, fair society, balanced outlook. Shared prosperity: What and how can you actually take that and explain it for the residents? We are working together for a growing of our economy, sharing the economic benefits, the shared prosperity, through most of our great Province. In a fair society we care for the vulnerable; we care for those who are probably less able to protect themselves and to fight and fend off themselves. We also look at this balanced outlook to the future that we are spending and sustaining. It is not all cuts, but it is not all debts. It is not all cuts; it not all borrowing. This Budget is a balanced outlook for the future.

In looking at all of us who speak here in this hon. House, Mr. Speaker, we all speak with a different tune, so to speak. We know we dance to different tunes on different sides of the House, but every single one of us has a unique district. Every single one of us as members are unique persons. A good friend of mine, and a teacher who taught with me, whenever I would make a comment like that, he would say, (inaudible) would say, and no two of us are alike either. So I just want to refer that as we all speak to this Budget we do have different points of view, we do have to look at our own districts, we do have to look at the entire Province, and we do have to really look at the entire country as it melds and welds into our Province and the relationships we have to continue on with Ottawa and outside governments, and all these other aspects of what happens to make up this great society we are developing here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, many of us get up and we talk mainly about a particular interest to us. A lot of us do not talk a lot about the Budget, so I want to take two or three minutes. My last position was a Grade 6 teacher of math. I was a principal, but I also taught math in Grade 6. One of the biggest challenges was taking the idea of math and to put it in context for a Grade 6 student, which should be able to explain this to all of the people.

We all stand in our place here inside this House and talk about different things, but what we really think we are doing at the same time, we are talking to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, whoever is tuned into their TV sets watching the debate that is taking place here. Basically, what we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is try to explain this in a perspective that maybe after I am finished today, some of my Grade 6 students might understand what I am trying to explain about how to create this Budget, but also most of the populace in the Province would as well.

Usually when you talk about graphs you talk about pie charts. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, and all my Grade 6 students and all of the constituents out there, that you are taking a huge pie plate and you are going to fill up your pie plate with all of the different parts that make up this Budget. How much do you actually need? Well, this Budget this year we needed \$7.5

billion to create this pie. If we take this pie, look at it, and say we are going to cut it into pieces, how do we fill up the pieces of this pie to create the Budget we are creating for this year?

Taxation, Mr. Speaker, and residents of Newfoundland and Labrador; if we had to take it and say this pie is created out of ten equal pieces, then four pieces of this pie is created and filled in the pie plate from taxation around our Province. Taxation has to be done in a certain way. The philosophy, I am trying to say, is that in the last three, four, or five years, government had a very competitive tax rate such that we have kept money in the hands of the Province. To increase and balance our Budget this year, we could have not left that money in the hands of the residents; we could have had a little bigger piece of the pie out of this Budget from taxation, but we did not because we are balanced and fair.

Another piece of the pie, Mr. Speaker, out of the ten pieces comes from investment, fees and fines, as the last member was talking about on the other side, and other provincial sources. One piece of this pie comes from that. That makes up half of this Budget, Mr. Speaker.

Then we come to the offshore royalties, which we are enjoying at this time but they are not sustainable. We are extending them but they are not sustainable to keep us going in the future, and that is the reason why we need to diversify. There are three pieces out of this pie that comes from the offshore royalties – three pieces plus four pieces is seven pieces, eight-and-a-half pieces, Mr. Speaker. The remaining piece and a half of this Budget comes from the federal government; 15 per cent of this year's spending comes from the federal government. There were years ago when 30 per cent-plus of our spending came from the federal government. We are quite proud that we are able to go this our own way.

Now, that is how we filled up the Budget. That is how we filled up the pie that we are going to use. How do we take that pie and serve it around to the different parts of the Province? How do we serve up this Budget to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

The biggest portion of this Budget, Mr. Speaker, as my grandfather would say five and three parts, or almost six pieces of this pie goes to the education sector, the health care sector, and other social sectors in our Province. It includes: Health and Community Services; Justice; Child, Youth and Family Services; Education; Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Then we go on to another piece of our pie of just less than two pieces, Mr. Speaker, and it is the resource sector. In that resource sector you are talking about Natural Resources, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Tourism, Environment and Conservation, Advanced Education and Skills. The final sector, about two-and-a-half pieces out of this pie, is for Finance, Service NL, Transportation and Works, Executive Council, the legislative part of our government, and the Public Service Commission.

When all of this was put together this year, we needed one extra piece of the pie. That was where we had to borrow to make up the difference to enable all of this to go forward for our Province. In this borrowing, we enabled a lot of the extra things that were asked for by the people of this Province.

Key statements from the Budget, Mr. Speaker, reverberate of the share, fair and balanced aspect. The key commitment in this Budget is to maintain competitive tax rates, and since 2006 this government has decreased taxes by hundreds of millions of dollars. This year, in particular, about \$600 million will stay in the hands and pockets of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is no small measure, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2005-2006, Mr. Speaker, we have had surpluses of approximately \$5.6 billion that we have paid down on the debt. This year we have a short-term measure where we are going to grow that debt a little. In order to sustain and go into the future that is not a long-term trend, Mr. Speaker, it is just a short-term pain.

In promotion of this fair society of post-secondary education that is accessible and affordable to all, Mr. Speaker, we continued this year – even though we had rough times or whatever here, we have kept \$5.1 million

currently into our Budget to keep the tuition freeze for post-secondary students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: It is no small measure, Mr. Speaker. Should we have taken that away to balance the Budget? We are also injecting nearly \$15 million in two years to eliminate the provincial loans for our post-secondary students and replace them with upfront grants. It is no small measure, a good measure in promoting the fair society for education for all of our residents.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy, Mr. Speaker, is the envy of the country. Again, this year we invest \$170 million in 2014-2015 to bring and exceed \$1 billion since 2006 into our Poverty Reduction Strategy. It is no small measure. Would we have taken this out to balance the Budget? They are hard people to pull money from.

Low Income Support this year is increased by 5 per cent, Mr. Speaker. In times when we have to be tight with our financial constraint, we increased our spending to those who have Income Support. The Low Income Tax Reduction threshold this year increased to \$18,500 for an individual and \$31,400 approximately to a family. It is extra money in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

For someone in that income bracket, when you allow them to keep \$500-plus in their pockets, they would certainly appreciate that and they can do a lot more. It would make a lot more impact on their life than it would to most of us in this House possibly. That is a part of our Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Our senior benefit this year, Mr. Speaker, is raised to the highest it has ever been, up from \$971 to \$1,036 which is a great increase. It is some well-deserved cash that stays in the pockets of senior citizens in our Province.

With the fair and equitable balance of this society that we are creating, early childhood education this year, an extra \$5 million over three years to enhance initiatives aimed at zero

to three year olds. Full-day Kindergarten, Mr. Speaker, although some may claim to announce that they had this in their platforms far before we might have had it in ours, but when it is put in a platform on this side, it has all been figured out, it has all been investigated, and we know that it can balance with what we are saying we are going to do.

The full-day Kindergarten, we have to renovate and redevelop the schools, have some additional resources in the schools as well as teaching resources, and this full implementation plan will be fully in place for September, 2016 – a great measure from this government.

There are 43,000 extra hours of student assistant time because people told us student assistant time is in great demand. As a former principal, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure yourself in your former role, you always struggle every year, when you close down in June to when you came back in September, not exactly knowing what your student assistant hour allocation was going to be. This year, we know there is more coming forward throughout the year, throughout the summer, so most principals now actually know what hours they are going to have in their schools and how this is going to impact on them for September – another great, great, educational measure in this Budget, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: Mr. Speaker, everyone stands up and everybody talks about deficits in different ways and all kinds of other things that are problems around here, especially when we hear it coming from the opposite side of the alley here in the middle. Just think now, I am going to talk about infrastructure spending in this Province this year. I am going to go through several departments in just listing what we are doing here, Mr. Speaker. Just imagine that if we had to take all of this out of this Budget, then is that where the other people on the opposite side of this House want us to be?

Infrastructure; let us start off with Transportation and Works, a total investment \$850 million. I will say it again: \$850 million. That is bigger than any deficit – \$81 million for

roads. In Bonavista North we are going to benefit because there is a bridge replacement which I will mention a little further down below and there are several kilometres of road that were announced just a few days ago.

Again, every district in this Province potentially is going to in some way realize some of this \$81 million for roads. A lot of it announced a lot faster, a lot earlier, and a lot bigger announcements than ever before that we can remember in history, thanks to our great minister.

There is \$76 million for the Trans-Labrador Highway. Let us just talk about these big numbers: \$71 million for ferry replacements and maintenance; \$9 million more for terminals and wharves. There is \$80 million in water transportation for us. Thirty-three million dollar expenditure in the Confederation Building and the Sir Richard Squires Buildings in St. John's and Corner Brook; \$29 million for the Placentia Lift Bridge and the Sir Robert Bond Bridge; \$28 million to manage and operate the 600-plus pieces of heavy equipment.

I am going to remind the minister there is a town in my district who would like to have a truck as it comes out of commission again this year. Again, at Musgrave Harbour, it is a very good thing for them, in a small community of 1,000 people, to be able to find a flyer that is taken out of commission and be able to use it for two or three years at a very low cost to them rather than buying a brand-new truck.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that since 2004 more than \$5.3 billion –

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. CROSS: You still know how to do that, right? In total that has been spent in this Province on infrastructure – \$5.3 billion. All I have mentioned so far here – and my time is starting to run out. I probably will not get through the end of my list by the time my time is out, but I have another time coming.

Did you also know that Health and Community Services this year, Mr. Speaker, had \$190 million expenditure in infrastructure, \$120 million in new construction and redevelopment,

\$50 million for new equipment, and \$20 million for repairs and renovations? Again, that is just in infrastructure.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, just to interject here as well, that in 2014 – I believe I heard somebody say and I could be corrected – the investment in infrastructure in this calendar year is the greatest we have ever had, except or probably even surpassing Igor when we had to spend money for emergency services for many areas of our Province? That is a phenomenal thing to be able to say based on this Budget.

There is \$200 million in Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Again, I need to speak to this because there is some money going into my district, about \$1.5 million or more, in Centreville-Wareham-Trinity, New-Wes-Valley, Gander Bay South, and Carmanville. Most of the expenditures there, as the minister says, are based on safe drinking water and management of waste water, which are very high priorities, so a very low expenditure there on kilometres of black top as it goes through. The commitment is there, like I said, for clean drinking water, waste water systems, and roads.

Of this, approximately half of it is allocated to the seven largest towns. We also hear that none of our towns this year, as well as last year, received lower Municipal Operating Grants than they did before. In fact, most of them increased, but at least the guarantee was none were lowered. That is a phenomenal piece of information.

I also have information here on Advanced Education and Skills, but I am fast running out of time. I will use those in my next time, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that this government, this Finance Minister, has listened to the advice of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, identified the needs as they expressed them, and each and every special interest group that spoke to her and her officials are the primary focus. She had to blend these focuses together to make for a good Budget for Newfoundland and Labrador, and I say, Mr. Speaker, this is a good Budget for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I take pleasure in standing up and talking about the Budget again today, and to address some of the concerns that I have with the Budget, and to address in particular some of the comments that have been made in the House as regards to the Budget, and to give my thoughts and our party's thoughts on the document.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing I have to do is address, of course, the Department of Transportation and Works and the comments by the previous member who just arose, because I am really quite surprised sometimes, and quite astounded sometimes when I hear some of the numbers that are brought up in the House of Assembly and spoken about.

I hear \$81 million, Mr. Speaker, is a record amount of money to be spent in Transportation and Works. Then I look at the Auditor General, who surely has the record number to beat all numbers, when he gets up and the Auditor General speaks and says you need \$800 million for bridge work in this Province, and there is good substantive evidence according to the Auditor General's book that some of that work has not been done since 2003. So I beg to differ whenever I hear of an \$81 million expenditure done on roads in this Province; there is \$800 million less work than what should be.

Now we are at a situation where we have come to see our bridge work literally collapsing under our feet, where we have seen this year more potholes on the roads, more rutting that is on the roads, than ever we have seen in our motive history in this Province. So I would beg to differ every time I hear something on roads brought up by this government that the right investment has been made on roads.

Every time I hear a dollar amount, the same as any other taxpayer in this Province, I question the expenditure that has been made in the past and I even question this one. This one is not about making a strategic investment to maintain what you have, but now government has themselves backed into a corner where now they

have to come up with more money to pay for what they did not maintain before, as well as pay for what is needed today. Now they have double the costs of what it would have cost twenty years ago, for example, to maintain roads.

Why do we have that today? Because we simply did not have a plan for roads, something that might have taken you on a five-year rotational basis or seven-year rotational basis, whatever government wanted to work with, as long as it was a plan to constantly revisit the idea and the ideal of having a road construction plan. That is why we are in the situation today.

Taxpayer of Newfoundland and Labrador, do not be fooled any time you hear about record numbers of dollars being invested in roads because it is not a happy story sometimes when we hear it. Sometimes it is a story that is painted to be happy so that they can come out with the proper excuse to say we did not invest according to the Auditor General \$800 million ago, so now we have to throw in a few extra bucks to try to play catch-up on the damage that has been done out there and the neglect that has been out there.

We can say the same thing about the ferry system in this Province when they made the announcement for two new ferries a short time ago. We have been arguing for years over here on this side of the House that there was a plan needed for ferry replacement. That so far has yet to come to fruition. We have heard money that was thrown out there for ferries of course, for new ones, which is great. Hopefully they will be a central cog in a new plan for ferry replacement that will be ongoing in the years to come.

We still need the investment into smaller boats, particularly those on the South Coast of the Province. Those smaller boats have yet to be addressed in spite of them having work done by Knud Hansen Limited. I believe they are out of Denmark. That company has come up with some fine designs for some boats. That was back in 2010-2011, yet here it is 2014 and nothing forthcoming so far on those new boats being replaced.

We have problems with the coastal Labrador boats of course. A lot of people are having

problems with services up there. Of course, a couple of times I managed to stand up here in the House talking about the need for new coastal services anywhere between Nain, Hopedale, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

That was done by some citizens up there, forwarded on to me, and I had the pleasure of standing up – I should not say the pleasure of standing up in the House, Mr. Speaker, to deal with that particular petition because it is something government should have been looking after and ensuring those people they would have a free, or relatively free service rather than the one they ended up with. I am hoping to hear from government on the long-term proposal they will be coming out with and see if there was a long-term buyer into that particular arrangement in the future, and see if they are going to be able to supply a better service.

Again, like I said to the hon. Member for Bonavista North, it is okay for him to come out and say it is a record number of dollars being sunk in there and a record number of dollars going into the Trans-Labrador Highway, for example. There are other areas of the Trans-Labrador Highway, for example, that I can talk about having been up to Labrador. The road between Forteau and Blanc-Sablon, anywhere between Blanc-Sablon, Quebec and the areas I travel farther up north along the coast through Forteau, L'Anse au Clair, and L'Anse-au-Loup, absolutely abysmal. If we go back to the days of horse and cart, I would not run the cart over it. You need to hear a plan, too, at the same time for the people of coastal Labrador when it comes to roads.

Like I said, it all comes back to having a strategic plan for roads and the proper investment you are going to have for roads over a particular time. Put the plan out for people. Let them know what is going to be happening in the next five, seven years, like I said, and the people would probably be happy with that. As long as they knew there was a plan.

As long as they knew they could go into a government Web site and say: Yes, my particular piece of road is going to be dealt with next year. It may be well maintained and everything, and maybe government might not

have to put in a strategic investment into that road. The thing is somebody would be coming by to absolutely check on it to make sure everything was sustainable with that road. Mr. Speaker, that is where I am coming from, strategic planning when it comes to roads and when it comes to bridges.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador know what it means to have a ferry service between North Sydney and Port aux Basques. They expect to have a good, operating service. They demand and they deserve a good, solid, operating service. One that is less costly to the taxpayer too, at the same time, not like the boats we still have in the provincial ferry fleet. They have seen a lot of emergency repairs.

We go through the tender documents, and I do not know how many times I have seen it, with massive amounts of dollars being poured into the older ferries in the fleet and no strategic plan to address the same. Be wary, I say to the taxpayer out there, to the Newfoundlander and Labradorian Budget watcher if you will, about that. I say to government, I would like to see a plan, but there is no plan. A lot of these things are done in a panic, and a lot of things are done out of necessity because they have fallen to the point where now they need it and it is too late to do anything from it.

Mr. Speaker, I will use this opportunity now, my part of talking about the Budget, to talk about government's estimates on where the price of oil is over the next year and where I think the price of oil is going to be, having been a market watcher of oil prices over the last fifteen-plus years. I think I have come to have a little bit of experience with it. Last year they planned for \$105 a barrel, and they were lucky. I said at that particular time that I do not think I would have went over \$100 a barrel because of the conditions that were playing out in the marketplace. As a matter of fact, they continue to play out in the marketplace this time around with no relief in sight. If I can say that particular term in quotation marks, "no relief in sight as regards to the changes in the market conditions."

We still have, of course, conditions of ongoing violence worldwide. The situation in the Ukraine is, of course, figuring in on some Brent

prices, but in spite of it all, the number that you see is grossly affected by what happens in China. Right now they are predicting a bit of an economic slowdown as regards to what is happening in China right now. That is driving down the price of oil today, for example, in the markets; in spite of the violence that is happening over in the Ukraine, the disruptions we are seeing in supplies, for example, in the Middle East, like Libya and Iraq.

When it comes to \$105 a barrel, I think – again, I will be very cautious about it because I still do not think I would have went anywhere over \$100 a barrel and here is the reason why. The simple fact is that whenever we look at these conditions we have to look at conditions, number one, of what is happening over in Asia, and of course we are seeing a Chinese economic slowdown that is happening right now. I think that is going to play out for a while yet before there is going to be any relief.

The second big factor, of course, came forth again last week, talking about US domestic oil production. The Energy Information Administration in the United States talked a bit about this last week. They talked about an increase in domestic production, and domestic production in the US is reaching new records. Right now, the last number I saw was about 7.9 million barrels in the run of a day. That number is going to change drastically. A report I saw the week before that, before that 7.9 number, actually said that domestic production was up around 8.4 million barrels a day. So, there is some disparity in the numbers, but there is one thing on both of these reports that they did agree on, especially when it came to the Energy Information Administration, the initial reports are showing that within the next year, within the next eight months, ten months, twelve months, you are going to see an increase in US domestic production of oil by about 900,000 barrels in the run of a day. That is going to do an awful lot of damage and here is why.

Like I said, this is my figure. If you add more domestic production in for oil, of course, that is going to end up devaluing the price of West Texas Intermediate and you will see the West Texas Intermediate prices dropping. When the price of West Texas Intermediate drops, provided you do not have a market for it and so

far that has been slowing down in the States too, the price of that has been dropping off a bit in spite of a lowering of inventories, what you are going to see is that West Texas Intermediate itself is going to end up dragging down the price of Brent Crude oil. Brent Crude oil, like I said today, just on the one word today when it comes to the economy in China, it is down about \$1.06, I think, the last time I looked here today.

We do have some weakness out there in the markets, in spite of what is being said about the improvements in the US economy. For example, the US jobless report just last week showed about 6.3 per cent, I think it was, in the unemployment rate. It is the lowest that it has been in years, but then again, at the same time as that, it did not do anything to the price of oil. That is what I am saying; there are little signs there about weakness in oil, not so much about the strength in oil unless you see further disruptions. Like I said, disruptions right now are happening in Libya and other areas of the Middle East, like Iraq, and that is adding something substantial to it. The word is, of course, on Libyan productions, it produces there about 1.5 million barrels in the run of a day. The latest that I have heard coming out of Libya was that they are only pushing out about 200,000 barrels a day.

Any increase in Libyan exports, of course, is also going to have an impact on Brent. Anything that you see happening with Iraqi crudes probably will end up having an effect, too, on crude oil prices in Europe and, hence, an effect on the provincial Treasury.

When it comes to balancing the news again, like I said, that is why I think that government has gone a ways out here in predicting 105. They may have gotten good advice about it, but I would be very cautious about that number and, like I said, I am sticking to about 100.

The other thing that the Energy Information Administration is saying in the United States as of last week, very interesting, I think, when I read it, they are still sticking to a long-term dip in the price of oil. Out to 2017 they looked at it, they are talking about \$92 for Brent prices, I think it was the figure that they used, but for prices to actually decline in Brent, backwards to \$92. So, we have to have some futuristic

thinking on the part of government when it comes to the prediction of oil and where it is going to be going in the future. They made a lot of bets here as regards to the spending. No doubt they have no other choice but to spend in certain departments, certainly in departments like health care where we know that we have an aging population. Mr. Speaker, that is a bit of a bone of contention that I would like to talk about.

The last time I was here in the House talking about what is going to be happening with the future demographic in this Province, it is probably indelible to every other province in the country depending on what their economy is operating like. I want to talk about the numbers and what the numbers are telling me. For example, I looked at my own age demographic between fifty and fifty-four years and it tells me right now that as of the Stats Canada population survey in 2011 there were 43,180 of us in the Province at that particular age demographic, like I said between fifty and fifty-four years.

If I go back to the age demographic between thirty and thirty-four years it tells me this; that there are 29,275 people of that age. Presumably they would all be taxpayers and they would be contributing greatly to the provincial economy here at the same time. When I go back even farther than that, if I go back to the age group between ten and fourteen years of age, there are 27,030 people in that demographic.

Every other year from my demographic right now, from the fifty to fifty-four age groups, shows a decline in population. It is showing a decline in population that government has to address. I think this is the reason why the Population Growth Strategy is one of the most important policy decisions that this government is ever going to have to make. I would suggest to government that it is not only a decision for government to make; it is a decision for everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador to make. There are going to be some hard choices in the future coming up.

Just looking at those numbers – I played with the numbers a little bit. If I was to put a dollar value to it – and like I said now my numbers are not totally going to be accurate when it comes to this. When I look at the provincial revenue

raised this year that they are projecting, I believe it was \$1.1 billion in basic personal income taxes. I will get the proper number. I think it was about \$1.1 billion.

If I go forward to the number of seniors who we are going to have in this Province – and like I said the Canadian Labour Congress has a really unique study on it – it tells us that we are going to have an extra 103,000 people of the age demographic sixty-five years and over, and we are not seeing that much money being put back into seniors' issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, just to look back on the number, personal income tax number, the revised number in 2013-2014 was about \$1.2 billion; Estimates for 2014-2015, \$1.148 billion. So, if I move ahead the age demographic, if we are going to have an extra 100,000 seniors out there and at the same time we are going to have decline in the population that we are going to have, those people behind us coming up in the workforce, if you will, it is obvious to me the kind of picture that it is painting. Of course, if you are going to have an aging seniors demographic, a lower population that is out there working in the workforce, according to these numbers, we are going to have a problem with our own personal income taxes that are to be raised out there in the labour market, so we have got a serious problem, for example, as regards to revenues that are going to end up being generated as a result of that to be put back into such things as health care and that.

Like I said, this is probably one of the most important policy decisions that this government would probably ever make, provided it addresses it today. The simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, when I also go through the books, when we talk about an aging population, when you go back through the debt right now that the Province owes for various bonds and holdings that is has out there, the dollars that are to be paid back are up and coming in the next couple of years. For example, I can go to the year 2030 when the 6K bond, payable in Canadian dollars, is going to be coming out. At the same time as I am talking about less dollars in government revenue generated just from income tax, they are also having to deal with the payback of \$450 million for that particular loan in the next few years.

So, we have got future generations that is going to have to start paying back these numbers, too. At the same time we have a government that does not have a plan to deal with the future generations and exactly how much money they are going to have to be paying back in the future as well.

So then you are left with a couple of things: how do you grow your population; how do you generate more revenue? These things are not answered in this Budget. What they have done is bet on the future that something is going to happen. They cannot just bet everything on Muskrat Falls and hope that is going to be the be-all, answer-all for the generation of revenues. They cannot just bet that offshore revenues are going to be the be-all and end-all, because the predictions are out there for declining revenues. They have to grow the population.

Mr. Speaker, right now it is disappointing to see that I cannot see with this Budget how they were designing to grow the population.

I will be on my feet again later on to talk again about the Budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, when I knew I was speaking today on the Budget, I had a number of issues that I wanted to deal with, as a matter of fact, too many to be included in twenty minutes. As always, when you stand and you get prepared in this House to speak, you get thrown off kilter by something that comes from the other side. The last time I spoke on this Budget I had to spend most of my time reacting to comments that were made by the other side with respect to the Department of Justice.

I find I have to do the same thing today because I listened to the Justice Critic some time ago and

he outlined a litany of ills with respect to the Department of Justice, how we had gone downhill in the last ten years, and that really the justice system was in shreds. If you listen to the Justice Critic on the other side, you would think we have the most primitive system of justice in the world. Mr. Speaker, I feel obligated to respond to that because some of the things, I think, need to be cleared up a little bit.

Some of the things he mentioned were timely and some of the things he mentioned I agreed with; for example, the fact that we have not had a justice named to the Supreme Court of Canada in our history. I agree with him. I think we are long overdue for that. A lot of the things he said, Mr. Speaker, they sparked in me the need to respond and I will have to leave some of the other stuff on the sidelines for another day.

He talked, Mr. Speaker, about us not having a plan for access to justice in this Province and we need some direction with regard to access to justice. I agree that access to justice is a big issue for us and a big issue for jurisdictions all across the world. Access to justice in this Province is certainly something we have keen interest in and serious concerns about, and something we have been working with diligently over the past number of years.

It is very appropriate, I think, Mr. Speaker, to mention that just last week we had a visit to this Province by the Supreme Court of Canada Justice Thomas Cromwell. Justice Cromwell is chair of a committee that is working exactly on that issue, access to justice. He just finished a committee report; as a matter of fact, there have been four reports over the years and the final report just came out. He is now going across Canada meeting with various provincial jurisdictions to discuss the report, the ramifications of the report, and what each jurisdiction can do with respect to improving access to justice in their jurisdictions. I had the pleasure along with the Premier of having lunch with Justice Cromwell last week and we talked about this.

As well, Justice Cromwell, when he was here, conducted a symposium for stakeholders in this Province on that particular topic. For the first time ever in this Province the stakeholders in the justice system came together to discuss access to

justice issues and how we can move forward – not just discuss it, but move forward – and get everybody on side, the law societies, the judiciary, the private bar, legal aid, businesses, and so on, to make access to justice easier for a certain group of people who now fit into a category that does not have proper access to justice. People who are served by legal aid are served and people with a lot of money who can afford the justice system can be served, but there is a group of people in between who have difficulty accessing justice. That is what his weekend and his trip to Newfoundland was all about, and not only in this Province, but he was visiting other provinces. We were glad to hear of the experiences coming out of the other provinces in addressing this issue as well.

One of the big issues for example, Mr. Speaker, is the unrepresented litigant, the people who cannot afford representation in the courts. There are quite a lot of them. One of the really distressing factors that came out of that was that Justice Derek Green, who was the Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal, suggested that in 40 per cent of appeal cases one or the other parties is unrepresented. That is concerning because when you get to the level of the Court of Appeal you are talking about legal argument. Court of Appeal cases are based on legal argument and when you are not represented at the Court of Appeal then you are certainly coming in a very disadvantageous position. The unrepresented litigant is something that is very, very significant, very concerning to us, and it is really what access to justice is all about.

I wanted to point out the appropriateness of his visit and what is happening in our Province. As a result of that, a committee has been struck. The stakeholders have met for the first time last week. They are plotting out a way now to move forward on this particular issue. The focus would be on finding ways and means to resolve issues before they get to court. That is really what this is all about, to try to resolve issues before they have to go through the litigation system. From all reports, the symposium was very well received, a lot of good, enthusiastic discussion, and hopefully we will see some good reports coming out of it.

Mr. Speaker, as well when we are talking about access to justice, just a few weeks ago we made

considerable investments in the Legal Aid Commission, over \$2 million in Legal Aid this year. The chair of the board has already indicated that we have the best legal aid system in Canada due to the involvement of the provincial government. Years ago, the federal government, who initially sponsored legal aid, had virtually withdrawn, with the exception of some small amounts, and the Province now is putting anywhere from \$12 million to \$14 million a year into the legal aid system. In terms of access to justice, this is just another issue, another example of how this government is moving on that particular issue.

When we say we have no policy or no direction with respect to access to justice, we are doing as well, Mr. Speaker, in this Province as they are in any other province in Canada and probably better than most. We are going to continue to explore this issue because it is a very compelling argument that will be made on behalf of the need for improvements in that area.

One of the other things that the hon. Member for St. Barbe mentioned was that this government has no direction, for example, for the police with regard to organized crime. I do not know where he has been for the last year or two, but certainly we are very proud of the efforts that have been made by our two police forces in terms of fighting organized crime in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, this government had the foresight in 2004 when it took office because it could foresee the development of the economy in this area and how that was going to grow. When you grow the economy, delinquent behaviour follows. This government and especially Premier Williams at the time had the foresight and the vision to invest heavily into our police forces.

Since 2004, we have put \$1 billion into policing in this Province and we put 145 new police officers on the streets. Mr. Speaker, this Province looked ahead and saw what was going to happen with respect to delinquent behaviour, especially the organized crime, and have put the mechanism in place to deal with it.

Friday past I was pleased to attend a function and speak to the Crime Stoppers Police Officer of the Year Awards along with my colleague the

current Minister of Health, who himself incidentally is a former Police Officer of the Year. This year they have expanded the focus of the program to include the Police Officer of the Year for the RCMP and for the RNC, but also they have included peace officers now as well. The Peace Officer of the Year Award this year was a municipal peace officer from the Town of Gander, for example.

Mr. Speaker, in talking to the police officers and peace officers at that particular function we were able to thank them and appreciate them for the great work that our police forces do. We are very fortunate in this Province; we have two elite police forces, the only Province in Canada to have two elite professional police forces, the RCMP and the RNC, who do great work. Only last year this government set up a special unit with a combination of the RCMP and the RNC called the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit to address organized crime, to address child exploitation, to address illegal drugs. They have made considerable advances and a considerable amount of investment went in to that, and in this year's Budget we are putting more money into that to advance that work.

Mr. Speaker, as well this year in Budget 2014 we put an additional \$5 million into the Budget for policing. That enables the RNC now to continue with the recruitment program and put twenty new recruits in the system. They will be able to hire twenty new police officers by 2016-2017. The RCMP will be able to put five new officers in Sheshatshiu, Labrador. We take no backseat to anybody when we talk about our investments in terms of policing or in terms of combatting organized crime.

Mr. Speaker, we admit organized crime is here. The police will tell you that; it is here. That was foreseen many years ago by this government and the tools have been put into place to help combat that. We are very proud of what we have been doing with respect to that kind of direction. When the member gets up and speaks that we are not giving any direction in that area, then I think these facts speak for themselves.

I am surprised at some of the comments he made as the Justice critic and being a lawyer himself. He mentioned, for example, that direction should be given, in violent crimes, to the Crown

with no bail. No bail in certain cases. Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General or the Minister of Justice or the government of the Province does not give that kind of direction. These are determined by the Supreme Court of Canada and by the case law, and by the prosecution rules and so on. Mr. Speaker, everybody in the justice system – our justice system is based on the presumption of innocence. The Supreme Court of Canada has already decided all citizens have a constitutional right to reasonable bail conditions and should not be deprived of it, absent of just cause. That is the law that our Crown prosecutors go by. To say that the Department of Justice should give direction, no bail, that just does not happen. It is not part of the system; it does not work that way.

He talks about breaches of probation and non-compliance; it is, again, the policy that if an offender breaches any of his bail conditions then the onus reverts to him to prove why he should get out again. In those circumstances Crown attorneys always oppose bail.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to bring attention to these things because they leave some misconceptions sometimes in the minds of people who are watching on TV or whatnot, and a couple of the conclusions that our justice system is in shambles. Such is not the case.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address one other issue –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

MR. F. COLLINS: – that the hon. member referred to. It is a very sore issue with us in the Department of Justice, and that is the collection of fines. There is no doubt that there is nobody in this Province who has not heard on the news two or three days a week about somebody being arrested and found out that he owed \$30,000, \$40,000 in fines. When I was Minister of Justice I hated to turn on the news in the morning if I heard another example of someone being arrested again owing \$40,000 in fines. We kept bringing our people in – what can we do to overcome this? I am sick of hearing it every day. It is a very sensitive issue, very concerning one.

This Province is owed, currently, over \$30 million in uncollected fines, but there are some things that need to be said. Eighty per cent of the people pay their fines on time, and only 2 per cent owe these massive amounts. It is no trouble to see where they come from. If somebody is picked up for a first offence of driving without a licence, for example, they are driving without insurance then the fine is \$2,300. That is the first smack. If you are caught a second time driving without insurance, it is another \$3,450. So if you are picked up three or four times it does not take very long to get up to \$10,000, \$15,000.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is not just unique to this Province. The Province of Ontario, for example is owed \$1 billion in uncollected fines – \$1 billion in uncollected fines. So it is not unique to this Province.

It is a question of what do you do to try to collect those outstanding fines. It is not easy. We have looked every which way and it is not easy, because you have mobility factors with these violators. You have unpublished cellphone numbers, you cannot find them, and you cannot track them down. Persons have no fixed address; persons are incarcerated or they have no fixed income. It is very difficult to get fines out of these people. They are not deterred by a weekend in jail or by impounding the car they are driving; they will pick up another old clunker somewhere and drive without any licence and insurance and it goes on.

What we have done, we have increased the number of collection officers from one when we came in power – we now have six – and we have partnered with Revenue Canada, for example, to garnish income taxes and child tax credit. This past year, we collected over \$1 million with that mechanism alone. We also garnished wages. Anything \$400 or over we put in the judgement enforcement agency because they have more tools at their disposal to collect as well.

The Auditor General –and most people are aware of the fact – made some recommendations to the Department of Justice of what he thought might be proper to collect these fines. He suggested a number of things. First of all, there were 54,400 unidentified tickets. It was found that these are mostly parking offences but with

registered out-of-the-Province vehicles. So, you can write them off; forgive them.

He also suggested that we lower the threshold of \$400 to the judgement enforcement agency, turn over cases that owe \$150 or \$200. Mr. Speaker, if you did that you would tie up the judgement enforcement agency, it would cost much more than the value you would collect, so there is no business sense for it, no business case for it.

There are also people who say you should not be able to get licences or permits if you owe outstanding fines. Well, you cannot get your drivers permit now, your vehicle registration; it applies to that. We have explored every possibility. To put the infrastructure in place, the people in place, and the administrative mechanisms in place the business case still is not there. It would cost more to put these in place than it would to get the fines. You could put all of this in place and there is still no guarantee you will get the fines back.

There is also the suggestion that people should be made to work off their fines, give them some things to do in the community. That has been mentioned several times. That is not as simple as it sounds either, because that would tie up resources in justice, including probation people, for example. It will tie up corrections people, it will tie up fines and administration people, and it will tie up the courts. Again, Mr. Speaker, the business case is not there to make those collections.

It is an area, it is an issue, and it is a concern that the Department of Justice deals with every day and the optics of it in the media are terrible. People are walking around saying if I got caught, I have to bloody well pay my ticket or I will wind up in trouble. How come they can get away with it? You hear this all of the time and it is difficult to cope with. You can understand people's frustration, but it is not for want of looking at ways and means of doing it, Mr. Speaker.

It is like before we changed the law with regard to small claims. The law in small claims, you could go to Small Claims Court for \$3,000, but sometimes it was not worth it. The legal work of going through small claims for a \$3,000 claim was not worth it. It would cost you \$10,000 to

get you \$3,000. A similar situation exists here. It is going to cost you more money to collect than it does otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, these are things that I wanted to respond to. As I mentioned, there were some things the hon. member mentioned that I agree with, one of them being that we do not have a Supreme Court justice appointed in our history. I think that is a sore point, and rightly so. These are issues that it is fine to get up in this House and throw out. The Department of Justice has no vision, has no direction, we are gone back ten years, and we are going back further all the time; people hear that and it is misrepresentation to those people. I think I have an obligation today, even though I wanted to talk about the good things that are happening in my district and all kinds of them as a result of this Budget, and even though I wanted to talk about the good things that are happening in this Province as a result of this Budget, the hon. member threw me off track and I just had to respond to his comments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly is a pleasure to speak in this House today on Bill 1, on the Budget, or on the non-confidence of the Budget. First of all, I can understand why the Attorney General said he was going to talk about his district but he got distracted and he wanted to talk about justice, which is fine. I can understand why because I was actually down in his district a couple of weeks ago because I have family members who live down there, and if I was in a district where the roads were in the state they are down there I would not want to talk about it either.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, moving on, I just want to welcome our newest member of our caucus, the Member for Virginia Waters. I want to welcome her here. It is great to have her and she is going to be a fantastic asset for sure. This is her first

day and this is new for her, so she has been listening very attentively to everything that is going on.

I know she may be a little bit confused here today because we got to a section here, Mr. Speaker, of our day which is called Question Period. I know she must have been really confused, but there is a reason it is called Question Period. Quite often in Question Period we ask questions, but it is not necessarily answer period. It is not called answer period because we do not get any answers. We ask questions, but there are no answers.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, before I go on I am going to say to the Member for Cape St. Francis, who is supposed to be here as an elected member, who is supposed to be here representing the people, and who is supposed to be acting in a professional manner – I am sure the people of his district want him to be doing more than simply sitting over there day after day heckling me.

Anyway, to move on, Mr. Speaker, as I said –

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible).

MR. LANE: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, before I was heckled by the Member for Cape St. Francis once again, I can understand why the Minister of Transportation was not giving any answers. Some people can say he was avoiding the answers, but I am starting to think maybe he did not know the answers. I think that is what it was.

I do not think he knew the answers because for the last couple of weeks he has been talking about Humber Valley Paving and been talking about this \$9.5 million bond that he was talking about. Now we find out he had to be corrected by his officials this afternoon that there were actually two bonds. It is not \$9.5 million; it is actually \$19 million plus HST, so now we are into \$21 million of taxpayers' money. It is absolutely amazing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to now concentrate on the Budget. I sat in this House intently when the Budget Speech took place. I listened to the

Minister of Finance read the Budget. Because it almost seemed like a production to me, after the Budget Speech was finished I was expecting for this big screen to roll down just like in the movies and we would get all the credits.

In that I was expecting to say: This Budget has been brought to you by Scotiabank. This Budget has been brought to you by CIBC. This Budget has been brought to you by RBC. This Budget has been brought to you by Visa and MasterCard. This Budget has been brought to you by Humber Valley Paving. This Budget has been brought to you by The Cash Store. This Budget has been brought to you by payday loans. This Budget has been brought to you by the pawn shop.

A lot of people have referred to this Budget – I am not one of them now, but there have been a number of people who have referred to this Budget as the billion-dollar shopping spree. That was not my terminology. That is just talking to citizens, average people who said it to me. They talk about the billion-dollar shopping spree.

In fairness, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about this billion-dollar shopping spree it was not \$1 billion dollars that was necessarily borrowed to put in to roads, infrastructure, and so on. We were in Estimates and we asked the question: This billion-dollar shopping spree, where is this money going? Half a billion, \$500 million, of that is going to Nalcor. Then I think there is something like \$330 million; basically, they have some other debts and so on which have come due and they are going to consolidate them at a better interest rate. Then there is another \$170 million left. That \$170 million is going to go with the other \$500 million deficit that we are going to run this year and I guess that is going to go towards all of these infrastructure projects we are hearing about and so on.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting. After the Budget Speech was finished, I cannot remember if it was that same night, maybe two days later – I think it was the same night – and I was listening to VOCM, to one of the talk shows. I think it was *Nightline*. I stand to be corrected. I heard the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale. The Member for Baie Verte – Springdale was on talking about the Budget, praising up the

government, and saying how wonderful the Minister of Finance is and how wonderful the Premier is, the same old song and dance we hear in the House of Assembly every day.

Basically what the member said was that he was so pleased because the Premier had called all of the members into his office individually, met with them – that is what he said – and said I want to talk about what are the priorities for your district. Mr. Speaker, I would say taking that type of approach is a positive thing. Unfortunately, I certainly never experienced that when I was on that side. There was certainly no consultation at all. You find out about stuff when you turn on VOCM the next day, but he did apparently meet with the members and said: What are the priorities?

On the surface that would sound like a sensible thing to do, a great thing to do, so that the Province in crafting its Budget would be able to look at what are the priorities for the Province as a whole and what are the priorities in the individual districts. It makes sense. The only problem is, though, I never got a call from the Premier saying: Paul, I want to meet with you and talk about the priorities in your district. I asked my colleagues all over here in our caucus. Did any of those members receive a call? Did any of those members -

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for Cape St. Francis, I am telling you, he is certainly doing a lot of chirping over there.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, they called those members in, the Premier called those members in, apparently, according to the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, and asked: What are the priorities? He never asked any of us, not one. I am not sure if he asked the members from the Third Party to come and meet with him and talk about the priorities in your district and so on.

The Premier, before the Budget, no. Okay, they are saying no. So why would that be? If the approach is going to be that we are going to look

at the Province as a whole, we are going to look at the districts, we are going to determine what the priorities are to be fair and square to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, given we are all paying taxes, we are all paying for these services, then why wouldn't we all be asked what our priorities are? No, they never asked us at all. They only asked the government members: What are the priorities in your district?

Why would that be, I wonder? Why would that be? I have to ask the question, why would that be the case? You could be skeptical and say: Well, it is just politics. That is why they are doing it. It is just politics because they are trying to figure out, we are in a hole, what can we do to try to boost our districts, boost our popularity in our districts and so on? That is what a skeptical person –

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order, the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I do not have a point of order.

He talks about he did not have a chance to talk to the Premier, but on August 17 he spoke up and said: I stand by our guided principles and stand beside this Premier and this government to defend the great things they have done to continue to support Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, that is the first time he has actually spoken without a script. Actually, he did have a script, he was reading it. That was great to hear, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. LANE: Listen, I have no regrets about coming over here. I did the right thing and I am quite satisfied with it, so are the people in my district.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying – wow, we have silence. Maybe we can keep it that way. I doubt it, though. Somehow I doubt it because the truth hurts. I have seen a lot of red faces over there and I can totally understand why. I can totally get it.

Anyway, as I was saying, it is interesting, Mr. Speaker, because – so you would say to yourself: Well, why did you ask only some members, not all members? Skeptical people would say: Well, maybe it is just politics and so on. I am not sure if that is the case or not, but it is interesting because I listened to the Member for Bonavista North, the wonderful District of Bonavista North, by the way.

The Member for Bonavista North said when he spoke just a little while ago; he talked about the fact that this year represented the greatest infrastructure investment that we have ever had or something to that effect. I do not have the Hansard yet, but something to the effect, we have made the biggest investment. We have made more investments in roads, we have made more investments in water and sewer and infrastructure and recreation. We have put more money in this year than we have ever put in before.

Now, that on the surface would sound like a good thing, but isn't it interesting that last year we were in restraint mode. This year we have oil royalties and so on, and oil money is reduced. We are into a deficit. We are predicting another deficit again next year. So instead of sort of staying the course, no, we are going to go out and we are going to borrow a billion dollars and we are going to spend more money, according to the Member for Bonavista North, in infrastructure than ever before.

That is a really interesting one, given the fact that not only do we have a deficit this year, not only are we projecting another deficit next year, but if you look at government's own Budget documents, if you look at all the economic indicators, the indicators are all pointing downward. They are not pointing upward.

Employment is going down. New home starts are going down. The GDP is going down. New vehicle purchases are going down. Everything is going down; yet, the only thing that is actually

going up is spending. Now that does not make a lot of sense. It does not make a lot of sense. Why would you do that? Why would you, in a time when revenues are down and indicators are pointing down, why would you choose that particular time to spend more than we have ever spent before in our history? That does not make a bit of sense to me why that would happen.

MR. J. BENNETT: The new Premier can fix anything.

MR. LANE: It is interesting, yes, because I think the new Premier is trying to fix everything, but I do not think he can fix that. I think the bottom line here is the decisions that are being made are obviously not being made from a fiscally responsible perspective. They are obviously not, because you do not borrow more money at a time when your revenues are down.

If you applied it to your own family income, it is almost like I am working, I have a full-time job, and I have a house, I have a car and so on. I am getting laid off. I am going to be laid off this year. I am going to be on Employment Insurance or whatever the case might be. Instead of making do, my car payment now is going to be up. Instead of making do with my car I am going to buy a Cadillac. That is what they have done, Mr. Speaker. It is amazing the irresponsible decisions that are being made here. It is absolutely irresponsible decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I have a little over five minutes left. I want to talk about a very important issue in my district, and that is the issue of the school situation in Mount Pearl, the Mount Pearl school reorganization. You talk about a flawed decision, there is another one.

I am glad we have a new Minister of Education. I am really hopeful that the new Minister of Education, unlike the previous Minister of Education, I am hoping he is actually interested in the best interests of the children of Mount Pearl. I am hoping he is going to listen to the families, the parents, the students, and the teachers in Mount Pearl. I am certainly doing my part to listen to what they have to say. The feedback I have been getting has not been very good, I have to say.

There are a couple of issues, a couple of schools in particular, Newtown Elementary and St. Peter's Elementary. I have spoken about this in this House before but I am going to continue to do so. Of course, St. Peter's and Newtown were both K-6 schools. We have unacceptable conditions at St. Peter's Elementary and there is no doubt something needs to be done.

We have kids who are eating lunch at their desk. They are doing gym class in the cafeteria. They lost their music room; they are doing music in the cafeteria. They have taken what used to be two classrooms and turned it into three classrooms, and the list goes on. No IT room – I am talking about a mobile IT station or whatever. They will just bring some iPads around to the classrooms and so on because they do not have a computer room.

We have seen a similar situation occur over time at Mount Pearl Senior High. That was quite clearly stated by the chairperson of the Mount Pearl Senior High school council at the presentation she made to the board. The only reason why – and she was clear on this – they were accepting of the decision to swap schools with MPI is because it was the only option they had. There were no other options presented.

Again, both of these situations, whether it is St. Peter's Elementary or whether it is Mount Pearl Senior High, were a case of neglect. It was a case of letting things slide. Mount Pearl Senior High was no different. You had X number of kids in the school; the population grew. Instead of addressing that issue, what did we do? Okay, we can take away the art room and we can turn that into classroom space. Next year, even more kids come into the school. What are we going to do? I think we will get rid of the computer lab and turn that into classrooms. Next year, more kids come along. What can we do? Let us take the music room and let us turn that into classrooms. On and on it goes until we get to a point at both Mount Pearl Senior High and St. Peter's Elementary where all of the specialty space is gone. It is all gone and turned to classrooms. Now we still have more kids coming. What do we do? Now we are into having to make these quick, rash decisions, and not decisions in the best interests of the children.

Had it have been addressed by the board and by the minister over the last number of years – I know since I was elected at St. Peter's Elementary in particular I met with the school board, I met with the school council and so on. So did other members and so did other colleagues at the time, in fairness to them. They were supposed to act on it, and they did not act. Then the next year they were supposed to act and they did not act. Now we are into this mess.

I still believe that capital investments are required. I believe capital investments could solve a lot of the issues here, but the problem the board had was that the Minister of Education was not prepared to provide any capital funding for those schools until every last space in any of the existing buildings was used. That might sound from a pure numbers perspective and from a pure financial perspective saying use every bit of space, but we are not talking about numbers. We are talking about our children. I know in the education system it is sad that we refer to our teachers as units or part units, 1.5 units and 1.7 units. These are our children and we should be doing what is in the best interest of them. That is what we should be doing. It is really unfortunate that this government has not seen fit to do so.

I will continue to fight for the students and the families of Mount Pearl and I make no apologies for it.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member his time has expired.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute privilege and honour to get up today to speak on the Budget. Before I get into the Budget, I certainly want to welcome our newest member, the Member for Virginia Waters. I go back to maybe fifteen or sixteen years ago when I walked into this Chamber, not realizing how much time I had ahead of me. Looking back

over fifteen years, it goes by very, very quickly. You will enjoy your time here, you have a lot to offer, and I wish you all the luck in the world.

As for myself, Mr. Speaker, I was sat down and I kept looking at the sky. I kept looking up. I could not help myself because the previous speaker – I figured the sky was falling. It was just unbelievable, one thing after another. It was depressing, I have to say.

I understand perhaps where he is coming from because, Mr. Speaker, we on the government side do not have all the answers and no one Budget is going to take care of all of the priorities that are in this Province. We have an awful dilemma sometimes in trying to make sure the money that is entrusted to us as a government is used in a manner that is going to be fair, equitable, and –

MR. JOYCE: Ask Frank Coleman about being fair.

MR. HEDDERSON: I say to the Member for Bay of Islands, when you are up I very seldom make a comment –

MR. JOYCE: You do, though.

MR. HEDDERSON: – very seldom, but if I do, I certainly would apologize for anything that was said out of order.

I am standing up here today to talk about the Budget and to make sure the people of my district are well represented. As I was pointing out before I was interrupted, Mr. Speaker, we try to be fair and equitable in our allocation of the funds that are entrusted to us by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Of course, I have already alluded to the fact that I have been in, probably, this Chamber for more Budgets than I care to mention. I have seen good, I have seen bad, and I have seen ugly, but through all of it any Budget is just that moment in time as a government, whether it is whatever administration, is trying to do the best for the people of the Province.

I must say, when I looked at this Budget I was more than pleased that our Finance Minister was able to juggle, to ensure that many of the

priorities that have been brought forward from both sides of this House, I say to the members here – and what I cannot understand is that all during the fall session this government was getting pounded over: Why don't you do this, why don't you do that, why not this, and why not that? In the Budget many of those concerns were answered. All of a sudden, what things are accomplished are pushed aside and now there is another list. How come you did not do this? How come you did not do that?

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that it was a fair Budget, a Budget that really is able to move this Province ahead in ways that need to be looked at. We had a tough Budget last year, no doubt, but that Budget, as this Budget, is part of that 10-Year Sustainability Plan, which is key. I am very proud to be part of a government that can look ahead over a decade and not just look down their noses at what is happening today.

If you were to listen to the Opposition members, that is where they are at. They are stuck in time. You have to be able to look beyond that pressing issue that seems to be overtaking you. You have to be able to look beyond it and a decade down the road I believe, if the plan is followed, we will be – well, we will not be here, I certainly will not be here – but our children and their families will basically get the benefit of many of the decisions that have been made.

When we talk about a starting point, when we look at a starting point, let me just read, or paraphrase it if I could, what one of our members at one time said: Do you know what? The only thing red that the Liberals left the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2003 was the books. That is what they left: the books. We were in the red. They had the Province on the verge of bankruptcy. The Province was on the verge of bankruptcy. The infrastructure was falling to pieces. The roads were falling to pieces. I quote the Member for Mount Pearl South. The Member for Mount Pearl South said that. He understood when he was on this side of what task was placed upon the shoulders of this government in 2003 –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MR. HEDDERSON: The Member for Bay of Islands, you were here in 2003. You know

exactly what I am talking about, and you know, but you do not want to listen now. You want to go off on something else. You want to get me down in the gutter with you, where I am not going. I am not going there with you.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member he needs to address the Chair.

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

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I will not get into what I said, because I asked about Humber Valley Paving and \$20 million. I do not think any member in this House is ever in the gutter, Mr. Speaker. I do not think anybody should refer to anybody in the gutter, because no member here is in the gutter.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you very much.

I figured that would get a rise on the other side, and it did.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) apologize.

MR. HEDDERSON: I certainly will not apologize.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: I say to you, Mr. Speaker, he is asking me to apologize. Obviously the Speaker said it was okay; it was not a point of order. So if I say you are in the gutter, you are in the gutter, and I am not going there with you.

So I say to the hon. members, that again in 2003 –

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

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

MR. JOYCE: I just asked the member to withdraw the remarks about members here being

in the gutter. As you know, it is unparliamentary, so he should just –

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I do not know; is there anything wrong with being in the gutter?

It is just a term that we use when you are talking politics – which I guess we are all part of right here – and if you are in the gutter, you are in the gutter. That is all.

In 2003 – I will go back to that – I was here; the Member for Bay of Islands was here. We had an awful task of figuring out what priorities we would put forward, but we did say that we would do whatever we could to invest in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I tell you –

MR. JOYCE: Tom, I never thought you were so low. I never did, I can tell you that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MR. HEDDERSON: We will have to talk about that at another time.

MR. JOYCE: No, I never thought you were, seriously.

MR. HEDDERSON: No, no. I say to you –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main, I remind him that you need to address the Chair.

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly will address the Chair as I go on. To go back again, and I will start where we left off in 2003, it is very important, Mr. Speaker, that people realize we have an awful climb. There was a tremendous infrastructure deficit and in

the last decade this government has made great strides.

It behooves me for someone over on the other side to get up and talk about only \$80 million in road investments this year – \$80 million. That is unprecedented. The average throughout the last eight years has been about \$60 million, so this is again a significant investment, I would say. It is obvious that infrastructure is an investment that is absolutely needed.

What do I say? Will that \$80 million take care of all the roads in Newfoundland and Labrador? Absolutely not, and we have to make sure we are investing and investing in a way that is going to make sure we are moving forward. Investing in roads is one of those areas where we absolutely need to. That is not only roads, by the way. That is your bridges. That is your brush cutting. That is basically taking care of the roads. Over and beyond that are the capital investments in perhaps the Trans-Labrador Highway, our ferries, and so on and so forth. Transportation is indeed a very, very important aspect of all of this.

That investment is key. We have to keep going, but again, we cannot overextend ourselves beyond what we can afford. This Budget – and yes, there is some borrowing that had to take place, but it is key to that sustainability plan that is absolutely necessary for this Province if we are to put ourselves in a position in the years to come to be the have Province that we really ought to be. We have to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that is taken care of.

To get back to the issues that were placed before this government and that have been addressed. I say the full-time Kindergarten; there are proponents for and against. My wife's first reaction as a primary teacher for something like thirty years is that one of the capital investments you are going to have to make is that you are going to have to make it in cots. In her experience Kindergarteners around 2:00 o'clock or so are going to need their naps. There is no doubt after a full day, but having said that, it is a tremendous investment of this government to address a concern of many parents, of many educators, and of many supporters of the school system.

I have already mentioned our \$80 million in roads which is so important. On the capital side, Mr. Speaker, I am again delighted in the continuation of our ferry replacement strategy. I was part of that in earlier years and I know the frustration that many people have, especially in some of our most isolated areas such as islands in dealing with transportation issue.

The North Coast of Labrador – and I am sure the member for that particular area knows the challenges that are before anybody with regard to the season opening with ice and so on. The people on the North Coast of Labrador lobbied successfully with regard to this government in making sure that the right solution was brought into place.

The announcement of – I feel a little bit tilted there, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if it is me or the camera there. That is another incident that I would tell you that it is an ongoing issue. It has been addressed in the sense that they are going to have a roll-on/roll-off ferry, passenger and freight, that is going to be able to travel that coast –

MR. JOYCE: Apologize (inaudible).

MR. HEDDERSON: Before I sit down, I will say to him, just let it hang there for a while. We are bantering back and forth because the Member for Bay of Islands knows that we go back perhaps longer than we care to from the basketball courts to the arena in here. In all of those times both myself and the Member for Bay of Islands have never come to a point where we are not talking to one another. Tit-for-tat, and if there is any way you have been offended, I certainly would take it back. With that done, I will continue on trying to beat up on the Opposition as much as I possibly can. Mum's the word.

Mr. Speaker, just to get back again to making sure that the infrastructure in this Province – and the infrastructure is so important, whether it is ferry replacement, whether it is roads, whether it is bridges and so on and so forth. Again, to get back to the fact that – and I think the Member for Mount Pearl South talked about priorities. It is incumbent upon every MHA in this particular Chamber to understand the priorities of their districts and not necessarily to wait for

opportunities to meet with ministers or whatever, but they have to be clear of the priorities that the people of the district want.

They have to, through whatever means they have, whether it is on the Open Lines or whatever it is up to them to make sure that government is listening. Whether you are on this side or on the Opposition, you have to know your district because those are the people who you represent. The problem you will run into is that there will always be conflicting priorities.

I have ever so many communities in my district. They all have priorities, but trying to balance out which way it will all go. The only thing you can be is an advocate, making sure that your voice has been heard by the right people and making sure we are getting things done.

Mr. Speaker, twenty minutes on your feet does not do justice. I am looking at it and maybe our little bantering cost me some time here, but before I sit down I have to talk about my historic District of Harbour Main. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that my district is like all of us say, I suppose, the best district in the world to represent. I tell you, I have never seen such prosperous times.

Now, that is not to say all are prosperous, Mr. Speaker, but I am just comparing it to when I came in in February of 1999. I had some of the most skilled workers in the world who have built bridges in New York and all over the world, who were trying to get work. They were really in an awful state. They had this great skillset. They could not get work. They could not do this.

Today, I am telling you, the people who are working in my district are just overwhelming. Not only are they working, but they are out in Long Harbour. They are doing projects here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are out in Bull Arm. They are up working on Muskrat Falls. They have a sense of great pride that they are sustaining.

Another thing that has happened is that for years there was very little in the way of new houses going up. Children were moving away. Now I find in a lot of my communities that they are back. They are building on family land,

basically in the garden. They are raising their children. We now have a situation where our schools are literally overcrowded.

I will not say it is a good thing, but then again you have to say it is a good thing because I taught in the 1980s and 1990s when our schools were emptying. There were no new people coming in. We were losing teachers. The education system was changing dramatically. Now I have a situation where – I suppose it is a good thing – prosperity has brought new people into my district. I say to the people of my district, I am glad that it is has, but the municipalities there are challenged to keep up with the services and our roads.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget, to get back to it and I allude back to it, has certainly lifted up the spirits of a lot of people, knowing full well that we are again on the rise. Next year we are looking at a surplus. We are also looking at building on what we have today. This building will be quite a challenge as we work through priorities. From the aspect of the Premier and our Finance Minister, I believe we are in good hands, that there is a plan, and that plan is unfolding. To the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we will continue as a government to build upon that decade where we have gone from what was described as falling to pieces to putting those pieces back together and moving forward in a very good way.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very happy once again to stand and speak to the Budget. It is very interesting to hear the member across the way talk about the great plan that this Budget has been based on, when we still see the negative ramifications of the preceding Budget, where we still see destabilization in the public sector service where people are still being bumped and still trying to find their proper jobs. People are being trained

for jobs. They were bumped out of their areas of expertise. We are still seeing the negative ramifications of the last Budget.

The last Budget, Mr. Speaker, I do not think was based on any plan. It was a kneejerk reaction to a fiscal reality that this government itself had created. Particularly, there are some issues I would like to address. When we look at the Family Violence Intervention Court, Mr. Speaker, we knew that was an effective –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We knew that the Family Violence Intervention –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

We knew the internal review of the Family Violence Intervention Court showed that in fact the court was a very effective court, that in the long run, Mr. Speaker, saved money. We saw in the preceding Budget that a number of decisions that were made in that Budget, particularly in the area of justice, had to be reversed. They had to make adjustments because the Budget was not based on a plan that served the people of the Province, that served the programs that were established within the Province. We see this yet again.

I would like to talk, Mr. Speaker, particularly about what has been happening with creeping privatization in our public service and also the care of young people, of youth, their safety, their rehabilitation needs when they are placed in the care of Child, Youth and Family Services. I have asked questions in this House already about the situation but I am happy to have the opportunity to speak a little bit in depth about some of the concerns that I see as someone who has spoken to staff in group homes that have been affected by the reorganization of Level 4 residential care.

Mr. Speaker, over a year ago the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, who is now currently the new Minister of Health and Community Services, issued a request for proposals asking for proposals for Level 4 residential care in our Province. Successful contracts were announced about five weeks ago, or possibly now we are into our sixth week. Mr. Speaker, this involves the placement of over 100 youth. These are youth with real, complex needs. Youth who may have been in trouble with the law, youth with significant mental health issues, so these are youth who need to be cared for by people with great experience, that are very experienced in the care of youth in our Province. So all the proposals that were accepted in the care of these youth, there were four agencies or companies that were accepted.

This has affected three group homes that were in Stephenville, Burin, and Grand Falls-Windsor. These three group homes were group homes that cared for youth with really complex needs for twenty years or more. A lot of the staff that are in these group homes are people with extensive experience. There is one staff for instance that I spoke to who had been working in the group home for twenty-eight years. I have spoken with a number of staff who have been working in the group homes for twenty years, twenty-two years, and twenty-five years. These are people who not only have the years of experience, but also attended real thorough training programs that were required by Child, Youth and Family Services. So these are people who are experts in their field.

These are also people who are public sector works. They are public sector workers in the same way that people who work for the College of the North Atlantic, people who work for our health authorities – because these institutions are all run by boards. These three group homes are run by community boards, as are our health authorities, as are our schools, through our school boards, as is the College of the North Atlantic, as is Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, for instance; all those employees are public sector employees. All these agencies and organizations are run by boards, and they are answerable to the boards that are either appointed or elected.

Mr. Speaker, these workers also, their contract is negotiated through Treasury Board; they are paid through Treasury Board. Also, they belong to the same public pension program that we all belong to as public servants. They also belong to the same medical health insurance plan that we all belong to. They have also many rights that many of us have, and they are unionized. So they are undeniably public sector workers. There are forty-five of them. Forty-five of these people about six weeks ago heard, mostly through the media, that their jobs would be cut within three months. These are people who have given years and years and years of their lives to take care of the youth of our Province.

I am concerned about that. I am concerned about the loss of those well-paying jobs, those stable jobs that were in communities that also need stable, well-paying jobs. They were also jobs that reflected expertise and that required expertise. They were paid well, as they should be. People who are taking care of youth with complex needs should be paid well.

That is one aspect that I am concerned about, Mr. Speaker. The other aspect I am concerned about is the care of the children who were living in these group homes. They also found out on the same day that they would be moving. These are kids, many of whom have been moved around and shuffled around all their lives, many of them who do not have strong family contacts or strong family supports. The group homes that they live in are their homes. The people who are caring for them in some ways are extended family for them. They are the ones who provide them safety, who provide them with guidance, and who provide them with continuity and consistency. This is what these kids really need.

They found out at the same time the staff found out that their group homes will be closing and that they all will be moving anywhere from forty-five to sixty days from the time of announcement. Many of them were absolutely devastated. Some of them had been living in the group homes for three years or more. This was their home.

Mr. Speaker, after that initial announcement, no one told them where they will be living, who will be taking care of them, and when they will be moving. The social workers could not tell

them; the staff at the group homes could not tell them. I asked the current Minister of Health who was the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services a number of times: What was the transitional plan and protocol for these kids? He did not have one. He looked at me as if to say, well, what do you mean?

Mr. Speaker, I have done a lot of research in how these kinds of transitions are handled in other cases in other provinces. They do have transitional plans and protocols. I can talk a little bit about that after.

One of the kids spoke out and said I have been bounced around most of my life. Finally I have stability and now I am being moved again. I have spoken to staff in all three of the houses. As a matter of fact I even met with staff at one of the houses in Stephenville. I visited one of the houses and they talked about the kids having behavioural problems now. They are acting out. A number of kids are dealing with suicidal ideation. They are very, very concerned about the health of these children because there was no plan behind this, Mr. Speaker.

This is something that was looked at by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services over a year ago, then all of a sudden they have awarded these contracts and everything has to happen really quickly. This is not the way to deal with youth who need stabilization and youth who need continuity.

Mr. Speaker, who is going to take care of these children? Well, this contract was awarded to a company called Blue sky. Blue sky is a private, for-profit organization. I have nothing against private, for-profit businesses or corporations. Private and for-profit corporations do a lot of good work and we need them. They create jobs. They can inspire the economy. That is important. They have a role, but not taking care of our high-needs youth. That is not the place for private, for-profit corporations.

Blue sky has been advertising. They have to hire staff and they have been advertising for staff at \$13 an hour. Again, we know these youth need continuity and they need stability. There is no way – Mr. Speaker, there is no way – that you can get people who have expertise in this area, there is no way you can get people

who do have expertise, if they do, who will stay in these jobs because these are really tough jobs. The jobs are even tougher if you do not have the expertise. It is tough on the youth who are in care and it is also tough on the staff.

I know, Mr. Speaker, because I have worked in a group home. I know how tough that is. Again, I have consulted with group homes across the country about how they deal with some of these issues.

We have children who are destabilized. One home added up that among all their staff they have 200,000 hours of experience – 200,000 of experience that is going out the door. These are people who are very experienced taking care of our youth.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing is that Blue sky was notified they have two months to purchase a home in all three of these communities and do the renovations that would be required, because they are a business and it is a group home so there are certain physical standards they have to adhere to. They have to get rezoning from the towns that they are buying houses in. They have to get approval from the towns in order to be able to set up a business in the communities that they are buying their houses in. Then they have to furnish them and then they have to hire staff, and then they have to train staff and then they have to get their programs up and running.

Mr. Speaker, who of us in this House can even within two months buy a house, clear it, get it renovated, just even for our own families, and even if you are a single person or a couple, who can do that within two months? We are talking again about our youth who are the most vulnerable, who have the most complex needs.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are youth who cannot stay in group homes. These are youth who have nowhere else to go for care. These are youth who absolutely need experts taking care of them and working with them.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I visited at Stephenville last week I heard reports of Blue sky going to

the College of the North Atlantic looking for workers who had come out of a two-year community care program, young people, twenty, twenty-one years old, with no group home experience, no work experience in this area, being hired. That is a problem, Mr. Speaker, because we are talking again about youth who might have OCD, fetal alcohol syndrome, who are violent. There have been a lot of cases and reports of violence and often staff have to call the police. They have a long-standing, good relationship with the police; these staff also have a long-standing, good relationship with schools. One of the principals said to one of the staff in one of the homes: What in God's name is the government doing to these kids? Privatizing ABE is one thing, but to privatize the care for these youth is totally unreasonable.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I was in Stephenville, a house apparently had been purchased a little bit over a week ago, and the kids in Stephenville are going to be moved by May 19 – and that is only two weeks away from now. So last week a house was purchased, but however they had not asked for rezoning – it was in a residential zone. This is a company opening up a group home. They had not asked for rezoning, they had not asked the fire marshal for absolute conditions that they had to adhere to, and the neighbours were all up in arms. They are going to be moving these children in two weeks. Work orders have been stopped on the house – maybe that has changed now, but as of Friday it was not.

So, Mr. Speaker, how can these youth be moved into a house that is not even zoned, not even ready, and not even yet staffed? How can that happen? When I look at this Budget and see the creeping privatization that this government has done through ABE, through other agencies and services that the Province provides, and now into the care of some of our most vulnerable youth in the Province, it does not make sense. It also is very dangerous – it is very, very dangerous.

What I see is that Child, Youth and Family Services – in fact, I asked the minister: How is he going to regulate this? How is he going to ensure that there is a proper protocol for moving these children? He said: Well, I am leaving that in the hands of Blue sky. Blue sky is a private,

for-profit corporation and there is nothing wrong with that. In terms of taking care of our vulnerable youth, there is something wrong with that. He said: I trust that they will take care of it.

Mr. Speaker, hiring people with no experience at \$13 an hour in this kind of scenario is not good. It leaves our children vulnerable, and it leaves the staff vulnerable.

I also wonder at this point, Mr. Speaker – I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services who once was on the board of directors of one of these group homes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: He was proudly on the board of directors of one of these group homes. He saw the good work that they did. Mr. Speaker, I ask him: What is going to happen in two weeks if that house is not ready? If that house is not ready, and I cannot imagine how it would be, maybe I am wrong. I sure as heck hope that I am wrong. I ask him: What is the plan for the children if this house is not ready in two weeks?

These kids are being moved before the school year is over. We all know how hard it is for kids to move but to move before the school year is over; there was no need for this. They did not have to move before the school year was over. This just goes to show that the minister did not plan for the well-being of these children. If he had planned for the well-being of these children he would not have put them in the hands of a for-profit, private corporation for one thing. For a second thing if they did have to be moved, they would not be moved before school was over.

When we look at the other two group homes in Burin and in Grand Falls-Windsor, those kids are going to be moved during exam week. These are kids who have such a hard time in school. These are kids who have so many blocks and barriers. One of the things that the staff told me and the kids also have said is that their rehabilitation and their success depends on building strong relationships, strong, lasting relationships with their staff. We know that is

the basis for success in these group homes. This is being ripped from them, they are being moved before school is over, and they do not even know where they are going.

For Burin and Grand Falls-Windsor, I spoke with staff again on the weekend and still to this date, aside from the initial announcement weeks ago that the move was happening, nobody has come and spoken to these children to tell them where they are going, when they are going, who is going to be taking care of them, and who they will be living with. Nobody has done that yet. That is criminal, Mr. Speaker. It is nothing short of criminal to treat these children in this way, again, some of the most vulnerable kids in our society.

Mr. Speaker, who is protecting these children? Who is speaking up for these children? Obviously, not the minister because to have designed this kind of situation when, in fact, they did not have to be moved before the school year was over; they could have waited a month because apparently they were preparing for this for over a year. Mr. Speaker, this is cruel, it is irresponsible, it is absolutely reprehensible what is happening to these children and that this government is responsible for it. They had full control and obviously they have lost control. They have abdicated some of their responsibility. These children are put into their hands for protection and care and they have misused it. They have abandoned these children and have left them in the hands of private, for-profit corporations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: 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 Child, Youth and Family Services, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

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