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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House resumed sitting at 7:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, Concurrence Motion, Government Services Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Concurrence Motion, the Government Services Committee.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Kilbride.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I am going to be off the topic or anything because I am going to talk about a very interesting subject. One that is very important to this Province, one that has been important for a number of years, and I am hoping it is one that is going to be important for many years to come. I am talking about the oil and gas industry. I tie it in with Concurrence because of the financial aspects and the revenue aspects of it.

Oil and gas accounts for a substantial portion of provincial government revenues. In recent years, it is approximately 25 per cent of what we take in. Over the last number of years it varies, 24 per cent, 26 per cent, but in most cases it is roughly one-quarter of our revenue that we take in.

I think we had a little bit of a downturn a couple of years ago because some of the rigs were in for repairs. They were not pumping oil for a while, so consequently the revenues declined a bit. Since first oil came from Hibernia in 1997, up to March of 2013, oil royalties have contributed \$14.7 billion to the provincial Treasury; \$14.7 billion, that is real close to \$15 billion. In that time, 1.44 billion barrels of oil have been extracted worth \$102 billion.

In 2014, 85 million barrels of oil will be extracted from our three oil producing fields. Hibernia will yield 47.5 million barrels of oil this year, Terra Nova will yield 16.8 million barrels, and White Rose will yield 20.8 million

barrels. The oil and gas industry is the largest contributor to the provincial GDP.

In 2013, 8,800 person years of employment were realized from this industry, including support industry. That is a lot of people working at that. I do not know if this included the fact that people go to Alberta. I do not know if they are even included, but I would say that is associated only with our industry. If you could count the people who are going away and coming back all the time, that would mean a big, big impetus to the Province here from the oil and gas in Canada.

Hibernia was the first offshore oil project to be developed in this Province. We all know that. It is operated by Hibernia Management and Development Company Limited. Hibernia oil is extracted using a gravity-based structure, a GBS. Hibernia and Hibernia South Extension did contain an estimated 1,395,000,000 barrels of oil, that is recoverable oil.

Hibernia South Extension will extend the life of the Hibernia field from five to ten years. From first oil in November, 1997 to the end of last year, December 31, 2013, 876.5 million barrels of oil have come from Hibernia. That means there is approximately 500 million barrels of oil left to be extracted. This represents 35 per cent of the total estimate that was there in the beginning. So the lifespan of Hibernia is now approximately ten years. In ten more years, or a little bit over, we will find that Hibernia probably will close down unless some oil fields, or more oil reserves are found somewhere in that locale in the distant future.

The Province has a 10 per cent equity stake in Hibernia. Terra Nova is our second offshore oil discovery. First oil came from Terra Nova in 2002. Terra Nova is operated by Suncor Energy limited using a FPSO, floating production storage and offloading vessel. The oilfield contains an estimated 592.4 million barrels of recoverable oil.

Up to December 31, 2013, Terra Nova field has yielded 349.4 million barrels of oil, which is 59 per cent of the recoverable oil that Terra Nova was estimated to have in the beginning. This means that 41 per cent of recoverable resources or reserves are left. Without adding reserves in

this area, the lifespan of Terra Nova is approximately ten to fifteen years. These are two of our oilfields, Hibernia and Terra Nova, with lifespans of around ten years or a little bit over.

Our third one is White Rose. When I talk about White Rose we are also talking about North Amethyst too, our third producing offshore oilfield. White Rose is operated by Husky Energy using another FPSO, which is a floating production system we are talking about here. The estimated reserves for White Rose are 379.8 million barrels.

First oil came from White Rose in November, 2005. First oil came from North Amethyst in May, 2010. The Province also has 5 per cent equity in this field.

From November, 2005 to December 31, 2013 – that is our last year – 218 million barrels of oil have been extracted from White Rose. This represents 57 per cent of the estimated reserves, which means 43 per cent of the reserves are left. Therefore, if we use the amount we are talking about extracting from White Rose this year, if we use that as a figure, I think it is around 20 million barrels. That would mean there is a lifespan of eight years left on White Rose.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in the beginning, the oil and gas industry is a significant contributor to the provincial Treasury. The reason I mention these numbers and mention these three oil fields – not that most people did not know about it, all of us know we have three oil fields. We know they have a lifespan that is going to end sometime, that they are going to be out of oil. I, too, and I have heard others; many are concerned in the past few years that we are going to run out of oil.

As a matter of fact, twenty years or so ago, probably twenty-five years, a common theme that you heard from scientists and people in the oil business, people in many industries, is that the world would eventually run out of oil. Now that idea kind of died out over time because of all the finds in different areas, but I was concerned about this and a lot of others were concerned: What will happen when our oil reserves run out? What would we do to replace the lost revenues, the lost jobs and the business

activity that is associated with this work? It looked like there was an end when you look at the three that we do have, each of them are close to ten years and then they would be all finished, all pumped out.

There is good news on the horizon, though. There are two oil projects preparing for the day when new oil will be extracted. There are actually two projects now ongoing where the construction work is going on and these will be pumping oil in 2017.

The first one is the White Rose Extension project. This is already in the construction phase, as I said. An estimated 115 million barrels of oil are expected to be extracted from this project using a concrete gravity-based structure.

MR. F. COLLINS: Argentia (inaudible).

MR. DINN: That is being done in Argentia, isn't it? Good.

The development phase of this project is expected to generate 2,800 person years of employment in this Province alone, and it will create 250 new long-term platform positions when the contract work is done and when they actually start extracting oil from the ground. Furthermore, the Province will get \$3 billion in royalties from the life of this project. That is just from this White Rose Extension Project. We will get \$3 billion in revenues and royalties from this project over the time that it lasts. White Rose Extension is a partnership between Husky Energy, Suncor Energy, and Nalcor, which holds a 5 per cent equity stake for us, the Province. I said already that first oil from this project is expected in 2017.

A second new offshore oil project in its construction phase is Hebron. We all know about Hebron. Hebron was discovered in 1981. The Hebron field contains in excess of 700 million barrels of recoverable oil. Now, when Hibernia started they thought there was only around 600 million barrels of oil; but after further investigations and when they got into it, they found out that it contained an awful lot more. We know that it is still ongoing and will be for another ten years.

The Hebron project received official sanction on December 31, 2012, becoming the Province's fourth stand-alone offshore project. The Hebron project will use a GBS also, being built in this Province at Bull Arm – that is on the go right now. Two of the four topside modules are also being built in this Province. The Accommodation Module is being built at Bull Arm, and the Drilling Support Module is being fabricated at Marystown. As of December 31, 2013, the Hebron project was employing 4,937 people; 86 per cent of which are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. So a lot of activity, a lot of wealth being spread around, a lot of good-paying jobs.

The Province has a 4.9 per cent equity stake in Hebron, with ExxonMobil Canada, Chevron, Suncor Energy Incorporated, and Statoil Canada also partnering. ExxonMobil is the operator of the project. First oil is also expected in 2017. The Province stands to gain many billions in royalties from Hebron, as well as jobs and other commercial activities and business activity.

The capital cost of Hebron is \$14 billion – that is \$14 billion – twice, pretty well, the price of Muskrat Falls. A lot of money is being spent, a lot of people from the Province are getting jobs, a lot of good-paying jobs, and a lot of revenue is going around the Province because of this.

The White Rose Extension and Hebron should keep this Province active in the oil business for another twenty years or more. That is even after the other three are probably pumped out. Now, this is pretty good for us, because it will keep us in the oil business a lot longer. That means if we are another ten or twenty or more years in the oil business, we are going to have these royalties coming into the provincial Treasury for that much longer.

Now, what will happen after this, though, is the question that some would ask. This oil history of ours will continue well beyond twenty years, I can assure you that, with the new discoveries by Statoil in the Flemish Pass Basin in 2013. I do not know if anyone heard VOCM this morning at 8:00. Fred Hutton was interviewing the Vice-President of Statoil who was ecstatic about the fact that they had one of these new discoveries and what it is going to mean.

In 2013, Statoil had two discoveries in the Flemish Pass, like I just said, the most significant of which was the Bay du Nord discovery – the largest oil discovery in the world in 2013. We had the largest new oil discovery in the world in 2013. In 2013, Statoil announced the Harpoon and Bay du Nord discoveries; these, in conjunction with the 2009 Mizzen discovery – also made by Statoil – have the potential to rival and replace Hibernia, White Rose, and Terra Nova. Preliminary estimates put the Bay du Nord discovery at 300 million to 600 million barrels of recoverable oil. Mizzen is estimated to contain 100 million to 200 million barrels of oil, and the Harpoon discovery is yet to be determined. They do not have any figures for that, because I guess they have not done much drilling in that area.

In the next year, Statoil is preparing to do a lot of drilling in the Flemish Pass Basin. When I listened to the interview this morning with the Vice-President of Statoil with Fred Hutton of VOCM, she was saying that Statoil is well equipped and well used to drilling in deep water. Now, in this Flemish Pass Basin the water is supposed to be over 1,100 metres deep. This is nothing new for this company. As a matter of fact, it is only routine for them, in all their other activities around the world. So they feel that this is not going to be a big challenge at all for them.

They are hoping to have the Bay du Nord project – they are trying to accelerate it actually so that in the next four or five years they might have some activity going on there. They say that they are hoping in the fall of the year to get an oil rig down – I forget the name of the one now. It is going to come down and drill more delineation wells so that they can probably get a better estimate of how much oil there really is. This is going to be our next big, good news, the Bay du Nord development.

That is two new projects that are going to take place which will keep us in the oil business for twenty, thirty, probably forty years. Now, that is not the only thing that is on the go here. There is a lot of exploratory work going on in many other areas in this Province. Oil companies are drilling or preparing to drill offshore in the Western part of this Province. They are preparing to drill or do exploratory drilling off

the Coast of Labrador and there is also drilling activity planned for Western and Central Newfoundland, on land itself. We are not talking here about hydraulic fracturing. We are talking about actual drilling of oil.

Along with this, calls for bids were announced in May 2013 for three different offshore parcels of land that companies could pick up and go and explore and see if there is oil in these also. Remember, there is a lot of ocean out there under our jurisdiction, and a lot of oil out there too. People thought years ago that we would only be in the oil business for twenty or thirty years. I think we are going to be in the oil business probably an awful lot longer than that, and that all bodes well for us because we are going to have the royalties and have an equity stake which means that we are going to get more out of these than ever before.

I do not expect the price of oil to go down to what it was when Hibernia started. When Hibernia started the break-even price for oil was \$18 a barrel. I think we are getting more than \$18 a barrel for oil now, if I am not mistaken. I saw today that the Canadian dollar is down around ninety-one-point-something cents, which also helps us. It means that we get more for our oil than we expected. It is good for exporting when our dollar is down.

Now, all of this discovery and new activity bodes well for the Province's Treasury and for our economy in the future. It means oil wealth and activity for many years to come. Now, when you combine this with Muskrat Falls, we said we were going to develop Muskrat Falls as a source of revenue in the future, we will sell excess power, we will take what we need and we will sell the excess power – and again, we are not talking about selling wagon trains; we are talking about selling a commodity that will be wanted and needed in the future. Muskrat Falls, along with all the other activities and our resources that we have on the go, we have good potential. We have mining expansions planned – new mines coming into existence and it is all going to be good for us. There is lots of room for expansion. Our fishery with the new deal that we have, the trade with European markets, it is going to be good for us in our fishery.

Our agricultural industry – there is lots of room for expansion for agriculture in Newfoundland. When you consider that we bring in probably 90 per cent of what we are using in this Province in the way of vegetables and fruit, we should be able to take advantage of the markets that we have here.

I always look at John Lester and Jim Lester in my district as a prime example of what can be done with agriculture in this Province. If John Lester could grow or had the land base, and I guess the weather and the time and everything else, to produce three or four times more than he is producing, he could probably sell it. He is usually out of produce by December, by Christmas, which means that there is lots of room. There are big markets here in the city alone, in the Mount Pearl area. Go in to Brookfield Road on a Saturday afternoon in the fall of the year – not even the fall, August, September, October and you find big, long lineups of vehicles looking for that produce.

Our timber, our lumber, our forestry, all of these bode well. These sectors look like they are going to be very important for us in the future. When I look at all of this, I can see the future as being so bright that I think a lot of us are going to have to wear shades.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to do a little bit of talking about the condition of the roads in my district. It is quite relevant in regard to I sit down and I listen to the members opposite talking about the strings of pavement that they are putting through their districts. Like every member here, we all want great things for our district. I am here tonight to speak on some of the things that are going on in my district.

Mr. Speaker, up on High Road North in Carbonear, it is the entrance to our town, the

town's boundaries end off by the first house going in that road. The road belongs to the Province. Our boundary line is right to the end of that house. Council has been plowing that road out to the highway just so that we could be half decent with government and they would not have to take their trucks in off the road. So, this road is in a deplorable state. It needs to be corrected. I take notice that the Minister of Transportation is over shaking his head saying no, it is not; but I can assure him that it is. The town is after sending in to the minister's office the boundary lines to the town and where it ends to.

Anyway, that is one issue in the Carbonear district, Mr. Speaker. Another issue are those lights there on Columbus Drive, alongside the TC Square. Last year the Department of Transportation went down there and they painted the dots on the road and one thing and another. Those lights are activated by vehicles stopped to the lights, lines across the road, and they never were done, Mr. Speaker. They just simply, simply did not get done. I can assure the Department of Transportation it is a very, very dangerous intersection indeed. Many, many accidents have taken place there prior to those lights going in there in that intersection.

So anyway, Mr. Speaker, that is just a couple of issues as it pertains to the Town of Carbonear. Now, there are a couple of other issues in Carbonear that I would like to bring up also. One is, I question when the school was built and the school was occupied and they were in building four more classrooms on the end of it – I am concerned about that, what took place there. Somebody had to have the numbers, and the kids were in there in school and construction going on, of course. That was something else, too.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are a few issues about there. In Harbour Grace, Harvey Street in Harbour Grace was supposed to be done two years ago. That is a Department of Transportation road. I do not even think there is anything in the budget this year to continue on with that stretch of road. Like I said, it was supposed to be done two years, and up to this point in time it has not been done.

Mr. Speaker, in Riverhead there is a section of road that was done by the transportation department about three years ago. The drain was on one side of the road, the road was elevated to the opposite, residents down there now, six or seven residents along that road, are getting the full brunt of the water on the road there. In some cases, it is running in to people's garages and one thing and another. We had a meeting with the Mayor of Harbour Grace and of course there is a letter gone off to the minister to that effect. I am hoping (inaudible) whether it is with curb and gutter or whatever the case may be, but the water and the pressure has to be taken off those people down there. They are having a very, very tough time down there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Harvey Street in Harbour Grace, I want to get back to that again for a little bit. Is it government's intention to finish that road for the people in that area? It is in deplorable condition. I will tell you, it was a good job done on it to where they ended off, but now we need to move forward with that. It is a shame to see such a state of a road, especially a road that belongs to the Province.

Mr. Speaker, there are another few issues in Bristol's Hope. It can be twofold. There is a beach that goes across Bristol's Hope that ties one road into the other, on the north and the south side of town. Over the last few years the Department of Transportation no longer tries to keep that road open, and there are some concerns there. On the other side of the road, the issue is that there is a pond and it is now infilling with beach rock and one thing and another.

Mr. Speaker, if the community of Bristol's Hope, if somebody took a loader and went down and filled in that pond, I am sure it would be an environmental concern to somebody in here. I am pretty sure that they would be out and stop them from filling in that pond. There is life in that pond, trout and other things, and that is not the biggest problem, Mr. Speaker. By this road not being reinstated there, as it was over the past, it is a big concern if a fire took place down in that area. Bristol's Hope is mostly a wooded area and the possibilities of somebody actually getting trapped down there, if they were not able to travel across the beach area, they would be trapped either on one side of that community or

the other. So, there are two concerns here. One is safety of the residents in Bristol's Hope; and, of course, the other one being the safety concern as it pertains to the environmental concern as it pertains to that pond in that area. Mr. Speaker, there certainly has to be something done for those people down there. It is not a big job, by the way. It is not a big job to have that road reinstated.

MR. MCGRATH: You are going to put (inaudible).

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, I take note the Minister of Transportation does not feel this is a big thing, but I can assure him that this is a big concern for the residents of Bristol's Hope. It is a big concern for me as the MHA for the Carbonear- Harbour Grace district. I will continue to fight to make sure this job gets done.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you, I have my twenty minutes now. They will get their opportunity when the time comes. They may think it is funny, but the people in Bristol's Hope, or the people in Carbonear, or the people in Victoria or anywhere else, do not think it is funny what is taking place with them out around there.

Mr. Speaker, Bryant's Cove; I will thank the government. They finally rectified the situation as it pertained to the drinking water in Bryant's Cove. I am very, very glad that was done. Unfortunately, it took an election to get it done, but it was done and I really do appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, they have another big concern up there right now, and they did apply for capital funding this year. It was Point Road. We are in the position over there now and the people over there are calling me, they are e-mailing me with their concerns. The problem is that road, Point Road it is called, the pavement is that bad on that road now that bus drivers no longer will travel out there with the bus – because they are breaking springs off the bus – to pick up the children. That there in itself is a concern for the safety of the children on the buses too I am sure, but that Point Road needs to get done. It is important to the people in that part of the district.

Mr. Speaker, Victoria is a growing community and needs infrastructure. I just want to bring up one thing in this House now and it needs to be brought forward. Some years ago there was what they call Limits of Service agreements. In order for our towns to grow on that part – and I will explain it too, because some people probably do not understand what it means.

What it means, Mr. Speaker, if just say for instance, you wanted to put another road in the Town of Carbonear and the town took it upon themselves to do it, they would not be able to apply to government for funding on that section of road because it would be what they call outside the Limits of Services agreement. In order for communities to grow in the district this should certainly be looked at with the possibility of lifting that, because we all want our communities to grow. Each and every one of us wants our communities to grow.

Mr. Speaker, just to give you an idea on that, Victoria is indeed a growing community. It has a lot of housing. It did a lot of housing over the last few years and it is certainly increasing in size. Of course we all want our communities to grow and prosper.

Mr. Speaker, Freshwater is another area. I will go back to it again; it has the same problem as Bristol's Hope. The beach is actually washed in over the road. With very little work from the Department of Transportation this can be repaired, this can be fixed. This will give people a way out.

It is the same situation they have in Bristol's Hope. Freshwater is a pond on the other side there, and there is some infilling taking place there now as it pertains to the beach. Again, Mr. Speaker, I cannot emphasize enough on the fire safety and the fire aspects of that community also. It is in poor shape and we need to do the same thing with it. Like I was just speaking to you, I did say as well as Bristol's Hope, so that has to be taken care of.

All towns in the district, Mr. Speaker, depend on our government to show a little leadership and to bring some capital works and capital funding to the district in order for the districts to maintain, to grow, and to just be a part of the Province. I am certainly going to try my very best to do that

for them by standing up here every day and speaking about it.

Mr. Speaker, I will say to government that in Spaniard's Bay – now in order for me to talk about Spaniard's Bay I have to look over at my colleague on the other side there too, because he and I split a district. I am going to give you a little bit of history on one road that was done down there, and it was done some time ago now. It was a road done up by the church.

We had a PC member in one end of the district, and we had the Liberal member on the other side of the district. The curb ended up getting put on the PC side of the district, and no curb was put on the other side of the road. Talk about splitting districts.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, just to give you a heads up on that, up until this point in time, in a five to six-year period, the Town of Spaniard's Bay received \$256,000 in capital works. I will say that this time around they received a very good increase in their funding. In one year they almost doubled it, and I am sure it is for probably a three-year period. They almost actually doubled what they received over the last five or six. I am very happy for the Town of Spaniard's Bay and for that part of the district, as well as, I am sure my colleague opposite is also.

Mr. Speaker, we all sit here in our seats and we all try to do whatever we can for our districts. I am very respectful of that. I am respectful of the members opposite for what they can get for their districts and one thing or another, but we are on this side, too.

I am only here because the people wanted me here. I am here to bring their concerns forward to you guys, and hopefully at the end of the day to have that conversation with each one of the ministers over there. When I have concerns I need to bring them forward.

I will just say this; any time that I stand here and speak I am speaking from the heart, I am speaking on behalf of my constituents, and I do not really apologize to anybody for that. We all live in different parts of the Province. Some communities get a little more than others. That is understandable; I have no problem with that.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot leave parts of the districts out because we are going to be vindictive. I do not want to think that way. I want to try to do the very, very best that I can do for my constituents. As well as all you guys over there, you try to do the best that you can for the district.

All I am saying to you here right now tonight, and I will sit down then, Mr. Speaker, is that I am going to stand here and try to do the very best I can for my district. Those concerns I brought here tonight gentlemen, those are legitimate concerns. I am certainly hoping that I get to hear the minister on those concerns, to discuss them a little further. It is a concern for the people who live in those communities and those towns.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on one other item now, just to bring it into the same fold. The fishery, Mr. Speaker, we have to be proud to be Newfoundlanders. The fish and everything was brought here and we were here because of the fishery.

Mr. Speaker, we need to spend a little bit more time on that, and emphasize on that a little because we have to remember one thing, the fishery is a renewable resource. The fishery and the forestry are renewable resources. Mr. Speaker, if we do not pay attention – and I will say this, the average age of a fisherman out there today is fifty-five years old. Like everything else, unfortunately we have nobody coming behind and that is going to present a real problem to the Province overall. I am not sure it is not being designed that way.

You take some young fellow now who wants to get involved in the fishery, it is going to cost him big time because the first thing he has to do is go out and buy an enterprise. He has to buy licences and one thing and another, which is probably going to cost anywhere from \$500,000 to \$1 million. Who is going to do that? I do not know. I have grave concerns that it is not designed that way by the federal government. I have some great concerns about it, like every other organization or whatever out there.

You will hear tell of that volunteers do not volunteer so much anymore. When you look around the room and see who the people are that

are volunteering, you will see a lot of grey heads. We have to engage our youth into getting involved. I have no doubt in my mind.

Mr. Speaker, the fishery is indeed an important piece and parcel for all of Newfoundland and Labrador. I would like to leave on that note, Mr. Speaker, but I will say that I am here and I am prepared to work with the ministers opposite to make sure that we bring great things to the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Concurrence here this evening as part of the budgetary process. For the people at home, this is the way the various committees can report back to the House what the committee members have heard in the Budget Estimates process and then provide some commentary on that. So, as a minister, I am not one of the members of one of the three committees of the House but I do have an opportunity to speak during the Concurrence process, and I would like to take this opportunity to talk about a few things here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about my responsibilities. A lot of people ask me: Minister of Service NL, exactly what does that entail? Sometimes I have to write it all down to get it all straight in my head, because it is a wide and varied responsibility and portfolio. I would like to talk to that for just about a minute before I get into the thrust of what I want to talk about here this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I am Minister Responsible for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission. Most people are pretty aware of that entity. I am Minister Responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Office. A lot of people probably would not know what that is about, but basically it is our IT department here within government. We deal with entities and

agencies, and the health care corporations as well, providing services to employees and to external people of the Province as well.

I am Minister Responsible for the Government Procurement Agency. It is an area where – the Public Tender Act comes under my purview. We are actually going through procurement reform right now, Mr. Speaker, and there is going to be a lot to talk about that in the coming days and weeks.

I am also Minister Responsible for the Labour Relations Agency. That was newly bestowed upon me just last week. It is a new portfolio that I am getting up to speed on. It is a very interesting portfolio, when we hear all the conversations around temporary foreign workers, what it means to this Province, where we are going in the future. So, Mr. Speaker, we will have lots to say about that in the coming days.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am Minister Responsible for Service Newfoundland and Labrador, and it is here I would like to focus my attention for this evening's talk. I just want to talk about the vision of Service NL, people in Newfoundland and Labrador living and working in healthy and safe environments with access to efficient and responsive programs and services.

We talked about Newfoundland and Labrador providing services and programs to the people of the Province. Mr. Speaker, we are 530,000 people spread over God's creation – and I certainly look at Newfoundland and Labrador as God's creation – but there are challenges around delivering the services and programs to the people of the Province. I believe the civil servants in my department do an excellent job of that, a tremendous job. I am very proud of the work they do, but we know that 500,000-plus people, trying to deliver services to them is a challenge. It is a challenge that we face every day, day in and day out.

When you compare us to a population base, like the City of London, Ontario; London, Ontario has approximately the same population we have as a Province. Well, their footprint, Mr. Speaker, is about the same size as the Northeast Avalon. Not even that probably, one half of that. Delivering services to 500,000 people

spread out over the size of two or three provinces is a real challenge. Again, it is a vision we have in place at Service NL to make sure that we can be the best we can possibly be.

By March 31, 2017 – and this is a mission statement, Mr. Speaker – Service NL will have enhanced program and service delivery through improved standards and regulatory processes that promote living and working in a healthy, fair and safe environment. You will hear that constantly in the things we do within our department, working in a healthy, fair and safe environment. That is one of the key areas and thrusts of the responsibilities of Service NL.

We provide a wide range of service, including licensing, inspections related to public health, public safety, environmental protection, the provision of vital documents. It ensures the health and safety of employees in the workplace in Newfoundland and Labrador. It also safeguards consumer interest. The department was created with the aim of providing a single window access point to the public for those services. The department derives the authority to carry out its functions from over 150 pieces of legislation and related regulation standards and codes of practice.

Mr. Speaker, we are the keepers of a lot of legislation that gives us the direction and the authority to provide the services to the people of the Province. We are divided into three branches. Service NL is one branch, or Government Services; Occupational Health and Safety, which is the area I would like to spend a few minutes on because it has relevance today; and Consumer and Commercial Affairs. That is the three branches of Service NL.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus a little bit on Occupational Health and Safety. Why do I want to talk about that branch of my department? Well, last week was Occupational Health and Safety Week here in the Province. Last week was North American Occupation Safety and Health Week in all of North America. We had a conference here in St. John's where we hosted participants from right across Canada. Last week we also had a National Day of Mourning for those who lost their lives on the job. It was a very poignant ceremony in the Confederation East Block lobby. This week, Occupational

Health and Safety Newfoundland and Labrador are having their provincial convention in Gander. I am going to be speaking at that on Thursday night and I am really excited about it.

The Occupational Health and Safety Branch of the Department of Service Newfoundland and Labrador is a branch of government that everybody here in this Chamber should be proud of. We are leading the country in so many ways. We are an example to the rest of the country in how to perform our duties to make our workplaces safer and healthier, Mr. Speaker.

It is amazing when you look at the metrics and how far we have come in the last ten years. We have a professional group of people who are doing incredible work. They are doing professional work that is at a level of nowhere else in this country and in North America. We are constantly being held up as a model to the rest of the country on how to deliver this type of service to the people of the Province.

We have thirty-seven inspector positions within the OHS Division, when we are fully staffed. We have people coming and going, just like any other department. Twenty-four of them are actually officers on the ground. We have a senior industrial hygienist, we have four industrial hygienists, we have two hazardous materials officers, we have two radiation officers, we have one ergonomist, we have one engineer, a mine's engineer, and we also have a consultant who works on a variety of different projects.

We have about thirty-seven inspector employees in these positions, Mr. Speaker. They have vast responsibility. They cover a wide swath of land and have major responsibilities when it comes to striving to instill a safety culture in the workplaces throughout this Province.

Mr. Speaker, employees, employers, industry, labour and government are coming together in a relationship championing safe and responsible practices at work, at home, and in our greater communities. The right legislation, the right enforcement, the right employee training, the oversight, the right culture and teamwork will add to incidents reduced, prevented, lives saved, and a safer Province to live and be in.

Mr. Speaker, our goal in the Occupational Health and Safety Branch of government is to accomplish zero injuries in the workplace. Is that achievable in the real world? The answer is yes. Every single accident, every single incident, that happens in the workplace is preventable. We actually call them incidents in this business, because they are not accidents; they happen for a reason. Accidents happen sometimes for no reason. Incidents are what we call them and it is an incident that happened because of a set of events that happened leading up to that situation to occur.

We need to acknowledge that we must all continue to work together to raise health and safety awareness wherever possible, and it is not just a responsibility of the people that work in the Occupational Health and Safety Branch of our government. Our motto is working safely together. As leaders here in the Province, in this room, in this Chamber here tonight, we all need to take the responsibility, but so do the people at home who are watching this here today. Safety is everybody's responsibility, Mr. Speaker. We all have to take it seriously and we all need to work toward that zero injury gain.

Mr. Speaker, we have metrics in place that I am going to talk about now in a minute that are exciting, I think – very exciting. We have achieved this all together. We have effective working relationships throughout this Province to enhance education, training, and enforcement. Bringing all facets of Occupational Health and Safety together, we are working to instill a stronger safety culture in Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we are doing it every single day. We are moving towards that positive outcome.

We have achieved record numbers, even at a time when there are more people working in our Province than ever before. Service Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes this and that is why increased investment in this year's Budget – we are going to have two Occupational Health and Safety inspectors that are going to be hired in a short while to assist with our inspection program across the Province. These additional staff will provide significant assistance in ensuring that employers and employees are following the very best practices and that more Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians go home safe and healthy at the end of the working day.

Mr. Speaker, the Occupational Health and Safety Branch of Service NL continues to work with industry, labour stakeholders, employers, employees, and certainly the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission to develop sound safety training standards and programs and to deliver effective legislation in enforcement in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I attended a conference last week where we had multiple speakers from right across North America talking about safety inspections and how important they are to making sure workplaces are safer, but the whole theme of the conference was called Make Safety a Habit. The key note speaker who was over from Scotland, I believe, he was from – he was wearing a kilt. He talked about the 20,000 or 30,000 employees within his company; it is a global company. They manufacture paint, a very highly combustible product, very high risk in the manufacturing environment. He talked about you can have as many inspections as you want, and that is an important piece of making our workplaces safer, and you need to use that as a measure in some way, shape or form to show that indeed compliance is happening in the workplace, but he talked about how people need to change their habits.

He talked a little bit about how sometimes some of the older employees, you would think are the wiser employees, were the ones that had developed habits over the years that were not necessarily the safest. They knew what they were doing, they were very experienced, and to try to change the habits in the workplace proved to be very difficult. The younger employees actually were easier to train because they were malleable and they sensed the risk that is inherent in their job situations.

He said by engaging the older employees to get them to understand by simple little things in a run of the day can change an outcome and focus on the older employees who are the mentors for the younger employees, they found a great uptake in their safety programs. Their focus went towards the older employees, the younger employees were there, and they wanted to hear what the older employees had to say. He said

that was tremendous in a very short time, very short turnaround; they got below 1 per cent incident rate within their company when it had a high of 3 per cent or 4 per cent per 100 employees, because they focused on understanding that bad habits are hard to die. Changing habits in the workplace, changing habits when you are driving your car, changing bad habits – you could do the same thing over and over again and nothing happen; it only has to happen once. Changing those habits were fundamental to making your life safer and workplaces safer.

It is not just about inspections – and we hear this every now and again about our rate of inspections, perhaps in the fish harvesting sector, where we know it is a very difficult sector to get out and inspect the fishing boats that are applying their trade two, three, and four days at a time, 100 miles offshore, how can you parachute or land a safety inspector on that boat to observe to see what is going on to make sure that compliance is happening with regard to rules and regulations. It is a very difficult challenge. It is about the training, it is about changing habits, and it was an incredible theme, Mr. Speaker, and everybody in the room was nodding their head and they were all professionals in the industry throughout this Province. We all have a role and responsibility to make sure that we have the safest place in the world to live and work.

Speaking of enforcement and saying that changing habits is important, enforcement is as well. Our branch has a strong record of enforcement activities. In fact, one of the leaders in the country. The most recent statistics in 2012 show that we had the third highest inspection rate per 100 employees in all of the Canadian provinces. We also issued more directives in other jurisdictions per 100 employees. You may look at that as a negative, we issued more directives. When we went to a work site, we issued more directives per visits. Well, the fact that we were there doing the work showed that our professionals were serious about it. We were there to observe the behaviours and observe the habits and make sure we called them out and said this is something that you are doing wrong and not to be doing again. That is a positive metric.

We said we issued more directives per inspection; this is indicative of our sound enforcement management program, a risk-based approach to occupational health and safety enforcement in the Province. By working with our partners, employers, employees as well as industry partners and the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission the Province now has the lowest injuries resulting in lost time compensation claims ever recorded in our history. This number has been stable for the last two years of 1.6 per 100 employees.

Mr. Speaker, this is about 50 per cent less than what it was ten years ago when the rate was about 2.4 per cent. That is a significant reduction in workplace incidents and it is all because of that collaborative approach to safety in our workplaces, but, Mr. Speaker, we are not there yet. We have done tremendous work in this area, our civil servants, our officers, our professionals in the job sites, in the high-risk environments, in other environments as well.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about violence prevention programs now with the City of St. John's and participating with the taxi committees. The Member for St. John's East might be interested in having a conversation about that. We need to talk about workplace violence. Working alone are new issues in today's economy and what is happening out there in the industry. There is more work to be done for sure.

One of the areas I would like to just talk about briefly before I run out of time – and we do have our challenges, we admit that. We do have metrics that we are not as proud of as we could be. For instance, when we talk about fall related injuries and fatalities, it is definitely an area where we need to see more improvement. We have seen tremendous improvement when we brought in legislation a few years back, I think it was in 2009.

In 2013, there were 8.1 injuries, including fatalities, per 10,000 workers from fall heights in the Province. It is down from 8.4 in 2012, and down from 11 per cent in 2009, which is a very positive trend but it is nowhere near where we need to get to when we talk about fall related injuries and fatalities. If everybody followed the rules and regulations – training is mandatory. It

has to be done if you are working from heights. You have to do it or you are not allowed to get up there.

If everybody followed the rules and regulations and followed their training we would be talking about getting close to that zero incident rate, Mr. Speaker, but we are not there. We need to make sure our people are trained as best as possible. They are making sound decisions on a daily basis. Employers are making the right decisions, employees, supervisors, every single day. In this area we need to work very, very hard.

We brought in the regulations in 2009 for fall protection. They were enhanced again in 2012. Workers who work at heights above three metres are now required to complete a fall protection certification program approved by the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission. Certification has to be renewed every three years.

In January, the Occupational Health and Safety Branch drew up a scaffolding safety guide to support worksite visits promoting safe practices and working from heights. This is just some of the few facts around this, Mr. Speaker.

In 2013, the Occupational Health and Safety Branch issued 728 work orders for failure to comply with scaffolding regulations, 190 of which were stop-work orders; 278 orders were issued for non-compliance with general fall protection rig requirements, 139 of which were stop-work orders; and 81 orders were issued for roof work infractions, 51 of which were stop-work orders.

When I look at these statistics, it shows that we are out there doing the enforcing that needs to be done, but these numbers are way too high. We do not have the buy-in from the industry that we need to have. This is an area I do not mind standing up in the House and saying we are moving in the right direction, but there is more work to do.

As minister responsible, I have taken keen interest in occupational health and safety. I have taken huge interest in it, and I want to see that ball move forward. I want to see us get to that better place where everybody comes home safe at the end of the day. It is achievable and it is

doable, and it takes a collaborative approach by all people involved in the industry.

Workers, families have to put pressure on their husbands and their wives, their loved ones, their daughters and their sons to make sure they are safe in the workplace. Think about safety. The first thought in your head when you start that task, when you identify that job, the task you have to do for the next half hour, half a day or whatever you are doing, you have to stop and think, you think safety. What do I have to do to be safe? What do I have to do to come home safe to my family? That is the key to making our workplace safer.

Mr. Speaker, I am running out of time. I am very passionate about this. I am going to be talking about this more in the House in the coming days and weeks. Just a passionate plea to everybody out there, let's be safe, let's work together, let's work collaboratively amongst ourselves. Let's make sure that we do everything we can, anything we can, everything we possibly can to raise the awareness of occupational health and safety in this Province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to more comments tonight.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to get up and speak for a few minutes on Concurrence and talk about issues in my district, and we have lots of issues.

The member across the way just talked about safety; let's make sure everyone is safe. Well, we certainly have lots of concerns when it comes to safety issues. I could use my whole time just talking about transportation, and I am going to start with transportation because until you have your most basic infrastructure needs met, when you cannot move people in and out of a region, where you are impacting the flow of goods of service, you have an issue and you are not going anywhere. There are many other things that hinges on that.

Just in the last hour, Mr. Speaker, once again we still continue to have ongoing ferry issues. We had a ferry that spent six hours on a 90-minute crossing earlier today. Then she came back and she has been left without icebreaker support again. I think it is absolutely ridiculous. Now it seems the earliest we are going to have that ferry move is on Thursday.

Everybody sitting here, that does not impact them, but there are a whole lot of people in Labrador who are impacted by that, Mr. Speaker, and there seems to be no plan b to move the people when they are disrupted. Now we have the *Apollo* on, she is much smaller than the *Bond*. When she is unable to go for two or three days that means the traffic is going to be backed up for who knows how long.

People with very important appointments, Mr. Speaker, have been waiting months and months to see a specialist. One lady called and said: If I do not make my appointment tomorrow, the next earliest appointment I can get is October. That is what we are dealing with, Mr. Speaker. It is just not good enough.

In the last half an hour I have had calls from the communities of Williams Harbour and Norman Bay. They have an ice road during the winter. That is what gets them in and out, that is what moves the mail and the goods and everything through. Right now, they have no transportation. Is there going to be a helicopter put on for them? What form of service – these are the answers that the people need to know.

The community of Williams Harbour, we have sixteen people on an island. They have all voted to relocate. Nobody wants to leave their home. When you talk about relocation, I think about the words of the song, I think it is Simani that says: they left without leaving and never arrived. That is what you end up with. Sometimes when all of your services are gone and the school is closed, they knew they had no choice. These people have been waiting for months and months now. They have many issues.

I have dealt with the member across the way on the issues they have ongoing with Hydro and unable to pay the bill. They are on a cut-off notice. That community is at risk of the lights going out. Now they have no transportation.

They are all seniors, I think about 95 per cent of them, what happens if someone takes sick and they need to get out?

These are the kinds of issues we are dealing with in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. It is very different. In here we get up and we talk about the blue zone and if the space is wide enough for wheelchair accessibility, and very important things, but the issues in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair are monumental.

You have heard me many times get up and talk about a fixed link. We absolutely do need a feasibility study done to determine if a fixed link would be viable. We certainly need something, Mr. Speaker. Something that would reduce the cost of our goods and services by 25 per cent to 30 per cent and it would also give us a means of moving people in and out.

A number of times when I have been on Open Line shows, people have posted things in social media and said this is what happened in Change Islands and other communities when the ferry went down. We are not talking just one community. When you cut us off from the Island, Mr. Speaker, you are talking the whole of Labrador. We now have a road link that starts in Blanc Sablon, L'Anse au Clair, goes right through my district, runs down to Goose Bay in Central, and to Lab West, and we know that the pavement, after a long, long time, is coming. So, certainly, we have to look seriously at that. We know that the former Premier did a pre-feasibility study eight years ago, he found out a number of things, and he did not carry it any further. We now need to know if the costs have stayed the same.

There are always advancements being made in how things are being done, engineering-wise, and so the cost may in fact be cheaper. Just recently I was in New York and used tunnels a number of times going over to Manhattan and on and off the island. You are down, you are under, you are through the tunnel, you do not even realize that you are under water, but things are just flowing all the time. Until we can get the transportation issues taken care of in Labrador, we are not going to move forward.

It is very frustrating for people when you see multi-billion dollar megaprojects going on all

around you. I have mentioned it here before, and I will continue to mention it. I talked to a lady today in Black Tickle – a whole family that is living right now on \$800 a month. They cannot even save enough to get out to Goose Bay somewhere to look for a job because they are unable to save the money that they need to make that deposit on an apartment. It is a sad situation, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the wealth – just coming flying in last night on the flight, Mr. Speaker, I read an article by the St. John's Board of Trade. In that article she was talking about the business potential that is coming up, and she said Labrador is going to be exploding, tremendous business potential in Labrador. It really, really, really is upsetting, Mr. Speaker, when you read that kind of stuff knowing that the residents, the people who need it, are not going to benefit from it.

I am happy to say that I do have nine more people who are going to tomorrow to Muskrat Falls. We have worked mighty hard to get them in there. We could not understand why – they did their profiles on the job site, they were not getting in, and we knew they were qualified. We have lost the supports in our communities like our employment offices that were providing that assistance, and it really does tax my CA office when half the time we turn around and we are ending up providing the service of an employment office. These are the things that we have to do because so many services have been cut in our small communities. So, little by little, we do have some numbers going in, but we certainly have a lot farther to go, Mr. Speaker.

The recent cuts to the shrimp – I know that is a federal issue, but I believe that the onus is on this government to do whatever it can relentlessly to lobby the federal government to ensure that either the cuts are reversed, or there has to be a fair distribution. As it stands right now, this LIFO policy – last in, first out – is very unfair. People have geared up, they have invested big money, and now they stand to lose all.

Many times at the Combined Councils when we sit around and we debate and we look at our small communities, we sometimes use the analogy that our small communities are bleeding

out. I was at a forum with my colleague for The Straits – White Bay North over at Memorial University just before the Easter break and I listened to Dr. Barbara Neis reference the fishery as the guts of the small communities. I thought, well, there you go, piece both of it together. If we take the guts out of our small communities, there is a good reason that they are going to bleed out.

We have an obligation to ensure the fishery we have often referenced as the backbone of our Province, of our rural communities, and we know that more than half of our Province is rural – we have an obligation to ensure that we do all we can to support the fisherpeople, to ensure that fisheries like shrimp, like crab, that we have done all that we can to protect that. Also, I believe that we need to be looking at other species to see where we can diversify, where we can go into new fisheries. We need to be doing more. There is a fair bit of interest right now in my area from fisherpeople on sea urchins. So, I will be working with them on that.

Mr. Speaker, broadband, again, something basic that you definitely need, broadband and cell communications – something that is widely lacking in my area. Last night I was driving from the coast into Goose Bay to catch the last flight out and I saw a truck on the road. It is a pretty desolate stretch of road and when you see a truck, you usually know they are broke down. When I pulled over this was a man from Sheshatshiu and his wife and a truckload of small children. They had broken down on the side of the road. He had a radio in his hand. I am not sure what he was trying to do with the radio, but I can tell you, where he was nobody was going to hear him.

Luckily for me I do travel very equipped, so I had the plugs and I had everything he needed. I was in a hurry to catch the flight, so I gave him everything he needed to fix his tires. If it is too costly upfront to put the cell service in place, why can't we have the Wi-Fi? Most people now have the phones, they have the iPods, and you can just message someone and you can tell them where you are; because if we are talking about safety, this is all about safety.

We live in a piece of the Province where we have very harsh weather conditions, snow

storms. I left the community of St. Lewis on Saturday night and I thought I was in a storm in March – very stormy, and here we are in the middle of May. These are the reasons why we need this infrastructure in place, Mr. Speaker. So I will continue to lobby for broadband.

When I think about businesses, many times I have stood and I have tried to convince government that if we had a tourism development officer in the district, the revenue that could be brought in, what a valuable investment. We are sitting on a gold mine in terms of tourism and I cannot understand how people cannot see that. We have tourists who come to places like Red Bay and Battle Harbour and it is unlike anything they have experienced. I have been to Alaska, Mr. Speaker, and I do not know if there is anything in Alaska that compares with what we have, if we had the funds and we had some infrastructure and we were able to market that in terms of our icebergs and our whales and everything.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, businesses are trying to do what they can on their own and are not even able to get on the Internet. Can you imagine? In L'Anse-au-Loup, the biggest community in my district, there is a business there that is experiencing great frustration because they cannot even use their Interac with a debit card in 2014. This same business is looking out their front window and all day long they are watching traffic go back and forth to Muskrat Falls. Despite what Nalcor said about their equipment is going in by boat, what about all the subcontractors?

That is the reason people are so frustrated. They know the billions of dollars that is happening a few yards from them, yet our people continue to live in poverty. Sometimes, yes, you hear them talking about separatism and everything else and sometimes you think you just cannot blame them for that. There is certainly a lot of inequality, injustice, unfairness, and it has been going on for quite a long time. It is very, very, very unfair, Mr. Speaker, that you can have a small Province and the disparities that exist between the Island and Labrador, the gap is so wide. We have a long way to go in terms of bridging that gap.

We have a new government now in Quebec, and hopefully we are going to see Route 128 connected and that is going to be a link out for Labrador. I believe then the Island is going to see that we should have done this fixed link a long time ago and then they are going to be hurrying to catch up.

Mr. Speaker, the health care is a huge issue and there are a lot of things that we can do to improve the life of the people in that area and save money to health care. We know that we are already spending forty cents on every dollar and clearly we are not meeting the need. Mr. Speaker, if we had some of this communication technology in place that I just referenced, it would certainly go a long way in terms of helping with health care. Every time somebody from a coastal community flies to St. Anthony, they go on a voucher that is subsidized by the provincial government, but here is the problem, Mr. Speaker: they get on a flight and they travel to St. Anthony on that voucher, they come back, and when the result of their test comes in, they get on the plane and they travel again. Many people have said to me: Why can the results not be given to you by telephone, or why can you not go sit in your community clinic, sit in front of a TV screen and talk with your doctor? Thousands of dollars, Mr. Speaker, could be saved that way.

I do not know why people are not looking at this. I do not know why government is not looking at ways to save money; looking at ways to spend smarter, thinking outside the box. There are so many areas we can see room for improvement. Like I have said here before, after all the room for improvement is the biggest room in the house, isn't it?

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, people are not talking with the people on the ground. Decisions are being made up here that impact the people down here. The people who are using the system, they see every day where improvements can be made.

I see them when I am in the district because I live there, too, full time. I use the same services they use, and I often reference it. When my family has an incident or an accident, I am using the same system. I am getting to see where improvements need to be made and if protocols

and policy that are in place are already working, because I am not taking my child to the Health Sciences Centre down the road or I am not in here, I have the same issues as they do. Their issues are my issues, so I understand clearly where their frustrations are, Mr. Speaker.

I want to mention our youth, Mr. Speaker, our most valuable resource in so many ways. May is a month of graduations. Every weekend when I am back in my district I am attending a graduation. That is one of the nice things we get to do as a member, to see these youth who have so much potential. They are the ones who are going to lead the way. They are the ones who are going to change a lot of this. I really believe that, Mr. Speaker.

Right now, we have youth from Labrador who are all over the world working in all different kinds of sectors. In the communities they have so little in the way of resources. In most towns we do have a community recreation centre. They kick the ball around, they stick handle the puck around, and then they do it up nicely and have their graduation there.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have been lobbying for is a family resource co-ordinator in the community of St. Lewis. One of the bigger communities in my area and it has nothing for children. We already know the benefits of the family resource centre program. It is a program that provides services for children, birth to twelve years old. We know how effectively they are working in other communities in terms of educating parents about child raising; in terms of educating them on obesity, how to eat healthy, bullying, and educating the parents.

All of this is an investment into children. Mr. Speaker, when you invest into children it pays off in dividends, it certainly does. Many times what we are talking about is such a small, small amount of money, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to push for that. We have been months working on that file and I am hoping we are going to hear something positive in the very near future.

When I was on to transportation, Mr. Speaker, I did not mention the dust control. I know I have stood many times, and I will continue to do so, urging government to replace the pavement.

Route 510, in L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay, is seventy-six kilometres, thirty-five years old. We did do a patch-up job again on it but that is just a temporary. We cannot wait until the rest of the pavement is done to address that.

Down in Southeast, because the two parts of the district is very divided, and half of the district is a little more advanced in terms of infrastructure. Down in Southeast, a small amount of money to dust control on provincially-owned gravel roads, I could not believe last year when the funding was cut. I do not know what the rationale was, but I can tell you many people have suffered issues with health since that time, Mr. Speaker. It is very, very sad; breathing, respiratory, and the list goes on.

It is like a sandstorm. Unless you have been there, unless you have walked it on a hot day, you cannot appreciate what this has taken from the people in terms of quality of life. When I tell you, you are just listening to me explain it to you but I have been there and walked through the communities last June.

It is absolutely ridiculous that we have lost something that was such a small amount and was making such a huge difference in those communities that have so little. I believe \$700,000 was the amount that was spent on provincially-owned gravel roads in the whole of Newfoundland and Labrador. So I imagine it was much less than that in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. I will continue to stand and push.

If there are environmental concerns about calcium, which is what the minister referred to, then let's look at some other form of dust control. Surely we can do something to protect the health of the people. Those people who are breathing in that heavy dust end up in the hospital and then they have a diagnosis. Look at the money you are spending then when they are back and forth and they are getting treated for different things. Really, it all ties together, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to raise that issue.

Mr. Speaker, the Mealy Mountains Park in Cartwright is a file that has been open for years now. I spoke with the minister's office just today wondering what the holdup is. That community was told in November that 99.9 per

cent of it was done. We are a long time waiting for some news on that 0.1 per cent.

I understand from talking with the office today that Aboriginal consultations have to be done yet. There is no time frame, we do not know when, we do not know how extensive, but Cartwright is positioned there as the gateway for Mealy Mountains Park. That is going to pick up a lot of rubber tire traffic. Every small thing is a huge thing to keeping the life of a small community alive, Mr. Speaker. We cannot wait; we really cannot wait to see – we need to push. That land needs to be transferred over from the Province so that we can get on with this.

I will take my seat now, Mr. Speaker, but I look forward to continuing to speak on district issues.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to stand here this evening and be involved in the Concurrence debate. I am going to talk mostly about Transportation and Works and how the department works and some of the things we have been doing, certainly in this past Budget and over the last few years.

Before I do, I would like to address some of the comments that were made by the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, as well as the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. I appreciate the comments from both, but I have to say I find it very frustrating that you can stand up – especially Carbonear – Harbour Grace, where in the last six years there has been over \$800 million invested in that district.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. MCGRATH: Over \$800 million in that district.

It is frustrating to sit here and listen to that when you have \$800 million that you know was invested. I know, Mr. Speaker, there is more

work to be done, as there is everywhere in the Province, but to hear somebody stand on their feet for twenty minutes and talk about all the things that we are not doing. There was one mention of one thing, and that was in Bryant's Cove, that we finally got right, and he was appreciative of that. He talked about High Road North, and I have to correct him. I have checked with the officials in my department, Mr. Speaker –

MR. JOYCE: Are you sure? The last time you checked (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Are you sure?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for Bay of Islands is doing what he does best over there now and just cackling, but he can do that. I do know the facts here, and I know that High Road North is not part of the provincial inventory. We have 10,000 kilometres in roadwork throughout the Province and High Road North is not part of that, so I would just like to clarify that for the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace. We have checked and the municipality has been taking care of that.

He mentioned the line painting. I have to mention that line painting last year, most of it throughout the Province, was not done and for a very valid reason. Every employee who works in the roads program, summer maintenance program, in the Department of Transportation and Works, every employee last summer was recertified for Occupational Health and Safety. We all know last year that we had a bad fatality on the highway. When that happened, I was the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador at the time and we saw the necessity then to have certifications done and upgrading done in the certifications and there was a stop-work order put in.

Many places – I get it in my own district; I was getting hassled just last weekend about painting lines on the highway in October when they were brushing snow off. It cannot be done. There was a very good reason for line painting not being done, and it is something that we are very aware of and we are addressing this year.

I heard him talk about Bristol's Hope and the road between the beaches. We are aware of the problems there. We understand the safety implications involved in that and we are watching it, as we are throughout the whole Province, and we will continue to do that.

One of the things that I heard him talk about was Victoria and the growing community. I remember during the by-election that Victoria was one of the communities that I happened to go knocking door to door. I knocked on every door in Victoria. I think it was the Minister of Natural Resources was with me that evening. I made the comment of what a beautiful, scenic, picturesque and rich-looking community Victoria is. It is an absolutely beautiful community, and it is growing vibrantly. You have to realize that when that is happening, so the tax base and all of these things have to be taken into consideration.

He did mention about the multi-year capital works program and how the minister this year, they are getting over double. He acknowledged that, and I was glad to hear that. I just want to let the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace know that we are listening and we are acting. I have had a lot of abuse in the last few days, but it is disturbing when you hear members across the way use words like vindictive. We are not a vindictive government, we listen to everybody, and in every district we do our best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we will continue to do that. So I just want you to rest assured, to the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, we will continue to do that. We will continue to listen and we will continue to try to work with you. It will not be in a vindictive way.

Talking about Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, I am going to start that she acknowledged there are nine more people in her district who just got jobs in Muskrat Falls. Yes, Labrador is booming. I am very proud to say Labrador is

booming and I am proud to be a part of that boom. There are nine more people in her district who just got jobs in Muskrat Falls. These are very high-paying jobs, but what she forgot to mention is that they are utilizing the Trans-Labrador Highway to transport from home to the job. They are very happy to have that road because they can go back and forth now at their leisure. They do not have to worry about catching flights or waiting on flights; they can actually use that.

She talked about Williams Harbour. We are working with Williams Harbour, as we are with other municipalities throughout the Province, on resettlement. There are sixteen people there and they have decided they want to resettle. We are listening to that and we are working through the process of that.

I have to talk about the fixed link, because do you know what? I would love to see a fixed link. I heard the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair mention, on many occasions, that a fixed link and the ferry service on the Coast affects every Labradorian every day. I am not sure I agree with that. Although members and my constituents certainly do use the ferry service, they also realize that at certain times of the year you are taking a risk because you are dealing with ice conditions. I can guarantee you that the 2013-2014 winter season has certainly shown us what Mother Nature is capable of doing.

So, in my district, which I think is the largest populated district in Labrador, I have about 12,000 constituents. The second largest district is Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Lake Melville. My colleague has about between 10,000 and 11,000 people. The whole population of Labrador is 27,000. In those two districts you have approximately 23,000 people. They realize that at certain times of the year, you cannot use the ferry service, or you cannot always depend on it because of weather conditions. Not because of the service we provide, because of weather conditions.

She brought up the icebreakers again. It is a federal issue. We work and we advocate with the federal government every day on the Coast Guard providing us with icebreaker service, and we will continue to do that. I am not going to

get into the fishery – she talked about the shrimp cuts. I thought it was absolutely wonderful that this government put together and formed an all-party committee to go to Ottawa, from all three parties who spoke about it here the other day in the House of Assembly. I thought it was a very positive report. So we are working together, and these are examples.

Tourism – I have to have a little chuckle at the tourism because as she advocates to have the tourism officer in her district; she advocates to have it taken out of my district. The tourism officer has been based in Labrador West for as long as I can remember, and as long as I am representing the people of Labrador West in this House of Assembly I am going to advocate to keep that position in Labrador West. I think they have done a very good job representing all of Labrador there.

We talked about broadband and cellular service. We know that needs to improve. That is why we just invested over \$20 million in the broadband system throughout Labrador, and we will continue to improve it and continue to invest in it.

So, we are doing things. She talked about repaving the highway from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay. Just this past Easter weekend, I had my employees on the road maintenance program in Transportation and Works all work overtime Easter weekend; to go in and do a lot of maintenance work in her district. It needed to be done, and I know it needs to be replaced. I am the first to admit that section of highway needs to be replaced, like many other sections of the 10,000 kilometres of highway that we have in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that needs upgrading or replacement, but we cannot get it all done in one year. I had an \$81 million budget this year for my roads program. I had \$852 million worth of asks. So, I got basically about 10 per cent of the asks to go through the Province, but we will continue to work away at that.

I mentioned \$81 million; that is what we have this year for upgrades and enhancements to the provincial highways, the roads, and the bridges. This year, for the first time, in January I had a pre-commitment from my Cabinet colleagues to pre-spend and get out early \$30 million worth of

tenders. What that did is we got \$30 million worth of tenders out early. By the first week in February, we had \$30 million worth of tenders out, and that gave us the time then within the department – my department officials then could concentrate on getting the other \$51 million worth of tenders ready and out to the public.

I am very proud to say that my department, the Department of Transportation and Works, by the middle of this month, May, we will have all of the tenders out. Normally they are not out until late June or late July. That caused havoc with the Heavy Civil Association, and we know that. That caused problems with getting the work done and you were always dealing with carryovers. So this government is trying to improve on the services. We are trying to improve on getting the work out early and getting the work completed on time.

I think it is only fair that I should let the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair know, I have \$76.3 million in a special fund for the Trans-Labrador Highway. As we all know, there was a special fund for that project. One of the largest projects in road infrastructure that has been taken on by any government in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador, over 1,200 kilometres of new highway being built. I am very proud to say that \$76.3 million is being tendered this year.

I am coming out very shortly with a tender for another eighty kilometres in the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair's district. I am coming out to get another eighty kilometres in her district done this year for upgrading and stone. Then they say we are not listening and we are not working with them. That is eighty kilometres from Lodge Bay going north to Cartwright Junction. So we are listening and we are working with you. I think we are working in a positive way.

We have \$71.5 million for ferry vessel replacement and maintenance. Now, we just put out two tenders. We have a new ferry on order that will be here in September, 2015 for Fogo – Change Islands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: A brand new, state-of-the-art ferry.

We have another ferry coming out in February, 2016 for Bell Island. We are also going to be making large investments in the docking terminals and the wharf systems at both of those facilities to accommodate those ferries.

Again, for the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, I have just had a tender go out and that tender will be awarded in the very near future for two more ferries. One for the Strait of Belle Isle and one for the North Coast of Labrador in the Torngat Mountains District. Two districts that are represented by the Opposition. Are we listening? I think we are listening. Are we acting? I think we are acting. On top of that, on top of those two ferries –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Mr. Speaker, on top of those two ferries that we have coming out there, the RFP is out for that. On top of that, we have put together – again, the first time in the history of the ferry system on the Labrador Straits and on the North Coast – a fifteen-year service, a full package put together. So whoever is fortunate enough to get that fifteen year contract, they will be putting new ferries in there. They will be putting a new passenger service in there. They will be putting a new freight service in there. They will be responsible for the reservation system.

The one company is responsible and able now to manage the whole system, rather than it being piecemealed in five different contracts. To me that makes a lot of sense. Are we listening? Yes we are listening. Are we acting? Yes we are acting.

I hear the Member for Bay of Islands over there. I challenge him, when I am sat down – I am going to use up my time. I will not give him my time. I challenge him to stand up and argue differently with me that any time he has placed a phone call to my office that I have not acknowledged him or not acted upon what he has asked me to act upon. Maybe not always in a positive way, but I challenge him to stand up in this House of Assembly and say different. I

have always acknowledged him, and I will continue to –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MR. MCGRATH: When I am done. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to give up my time.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, I have always acknowledged him and I have always acted upon his requests, and I will continue to do that. I will continue to work with him in a positive way.

Some of the other things we have done; you look at the Confederation Building. I remember during Estimates, I was a bit taken back during Estimates because in actual fact I only got halfway through my Estimates. I looked at my colleagues and they had three hours, and for the first two hours-and-fifteen minutes I listened to a member ask me questions, then answer the questions and then comment on his answers. I was not sure what my role was. At one point I said: Well, you have already answered those questions so I am not sure I have to.

Then for the next forty-five minutes I was drilled on a particular issue and when the member thought he had what he was looking for, he stopped. I looked my colleagues and I looked at a full complement of professionals I had brought with me to answer the questions in case I was not capable, a full complement of professionals with me, and not quite two-thirds of our way through the Estimates book they said we are done, thank you very much. We were listening. I was bit baffled, but that is okay. We will continue to listen.

I am going to run out of time, I see I am getting short. Just another couple of little things that I would like to mention. When I say little things, like \$32.7 million that is going into the building. You look at this building here, and one of things, as I was saying, that came up in Estimates was

the condition of the building. I heard the members from the Opposition talking about how the cost has escalated on the repairs to the Confederation Building.

As the Minister of Transportation and Works, my department and I shared pictures with the Opposition during the Estimates. They say a picture talks a thousand words. Well, I can guarantee you these pictures talked millions of words because it was frightening to see the work that was done in the building.

You have no choice, I do not care if it is a Progressive Conservative government, if it is a Liberal government, or if it is an NDP government, it would be unsafe to leave the building in the condition it was in. As we all know, we were replacing the windows. When they started to replace the windows they realized all of the limestone had to be replaced around the windows.

When we got into the tower, when we took off the outer face on the tower – and I saw the pictures of what we were underneath every day – it was frightening. I shared those pictures with the Opposition. I think they were as amazed as I was, and there was no argument that the work had to be done. That money that is being invested is being invested into what I have to say is a very important part of our heritage.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) blue windows.

MR. MCGRATH: I hear the member from across the way talking about the blue. I only have less than a minute left. The rationale of the blue tint in the windows is to save money. It keeps the heat out in the summer; it keeps the heat in, in the winter.

Would red work? I do not think so, and I can guarantee you it would not look good. Orange? Sorry, I am not there either. To me, blue is by far the best choice and the most aesthetically pleasing colour that you could put there. I will not apologize for those beautiful blue windows.

Mr. Speaker, I am running out of time here now so I am going to clue up. I am sure I will get an opportunity to stand up again. I can go on for an hour talking about some of the wonderful things

that the Department of Transportation and Works is doing, the budget that we put out this year. I am excited for the work that we are going to be doing and I know that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador realize and appreciate everything that we are doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was going to say something nice about the minister, but then he said did not like orange, so there you go. I have to say a couple of things –

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: The Minister of Transportation and Works said I could stand up and – I did meet with the minister three weeks ago. He was going to give the people of Hughes Brook on the North Shore how much paving was going to be done to correct the unsafe conditions. They are still waiting.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with your ruling. I wanted to say something about the minister because, of course, I know that over the last couple of weeks he has been having a bit of a hard time in the House. I know that the whole issue of Humber Valley Paving has gone to the Auditor General, as it should.

I know that he is responsive to concerns. I can certainly attest that while he was Minister of Service NL when we were pushing for move-over legislation in this Province to protect highway workers, he was more than agreeable to that. We sat down and had a nice, cordial meeting about that and the next thing you know the law was before this House. It was probably one of best things that I can say, so far, in my

term of service that this government is after doing when it comes to the protection of workers.

So, I do know about his responsiveness when it comes to that. Sometimes, I guess, we question the way that government pushes its policy; but when it comes to responsiveness, I will say about the minister that while so far the jury is out, I will give him top marks on the rules when it comes to the move-over legislation.

I have to say, first off, that I did not make it to the Transportation and Works Estimates Committee this time around. I had a pressing family matter that was ongoing that night. I want to thank the research staff in our party who gave us a very thorough briefing on what happened in Estimates that night. So I want to thank the staff who work in my office who are very hard workers and very diligent about taking notes. They did give me a good briefing with regard to what happened. Especially the monies that have been sunk into the Confederation Building here, they did give me some very vivid descriptions on exactly what has been happening with this building.

I have to concur with the minister that this place was ready to fall down around your ears. I can only attest to when you go out through the back entrance of the building here, the old Bank of Montreal entrance, you can see the cracks in the corners of the building where it looked like brick work was going to be letting go. I am only too glad to know that the government is having to spend some money in it to correct the inequities, I guess, of the mid-1950s when this building was under construction back then.

In some cases, Mr. Speaker, while you agree with some things that government does do, you disagree with other things the government has done in the past. I can certainly speak to one particular matter because this whole night started off talking about provincial revenues, provincial royalties, that have come into the government's hands since 1997.

At that particular time the Member for Kilbride stood on his feet and he mentioned \$14.7 billion, with a B, but he forgot another important component of revenue that was taken in and used by particular departments, namely

Transportation and Works, and that would be the gasoline tax in this Province which also adds another \$2.6 billion to government revenues. Now we are up to \$17.3 billion, and that would be my point. Because, at the same time as the minister mentioning about the amount of dollars that are put into roads this year, \$81 million which is supposed to be a new record, \$76 million as well from the special fund, as they call it – I would certainly like to know more about the special fund. I think it would be federal monies that they would be talking about. At the same time, \$183 million is projected to be picked up by this government this year in gas tax revenue.

Overall since 1997, like I said, we are dealing with two Administrations. We are dealing with the Conservatives and we are dealing with the Liberals back in 1997 when oil first came in on shore. That is great, fine and dandy. What we did not see was a plan for that revenue when it came to roads. Hence, the minister stands on his feet and he says he had \$852 million in asks: roads, bridges, that sort of thing in this Province that is sorely needed.

The Auditor General in his report to the House of Assembly, in his last report, talked about over \$800 million in bridge work alone, in culvert work, that is obviously going to have to be done by this government and the next. We now have to have that very stringent need for a plan to deal with the road and bridge situation in this Province. While he says \$852 million in asks on the part of the people of the Province –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. MURPHY: What was that?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. MURPHY: Certainly, I do not think, it does not include the amount of monies that the Auditor General is talking about. You have about \$1.6 billion – and this is altogether alone, just on that basis alone, that because they do not have a plan, we are now that far back in our work that now they are having to play catch up with the little bits of money that is coming in. It is no wonder they are pressing for other sorts of revenue, for example, like the Muskrat Falls Project that is supposedly supposed to be the end

of our financial woes when oil runs out. We still do not know whether solar is going to take over the world, or we do not know whether wind energy is going to be taking over the world, or we do not know if the titanium battery is going to have an impact.

If you look down to the New York State, for example, there are talking about using titanium batteries now in most of their transportations systems down there, then if the power goes out they are not going to need electricity for a nice long time. So, we have emerging technologies, too, that we should be looking at and that we should be cautious over before we go ahead and invest in things like electrical projects that would probably take twice as long to pay for under the government's thinking than what they actually think, and at the same time make social programs pay for it in the end.

Because of the simple fact that we do not have a plan for roads, I say to the minister and I say to the government – and the Auditor General said that it appears that since 2003 it was nothing but pure neglect and that is why we are in this situation now. It is particularly noticeable since 2003 that we did not see that strategic investment in roads and bridges.

Where else can we look to say that there was probably no plan when it came to Transportation and Works when it came to that, when it came to this government? We can say certainly that it came about in the ferry system. We are seeing some changes now because of necessity. Because of necessity we are seeing – I will use the term panic spending here; not to say that these are not good investments in the boat, but they have to do it now because of maintenance problems, because of the age of the boats.

The minister can stand on his feet any time he wants to. I will grant him leave to stand up and tell us the average age of the old boats that are out there now. He will stand up and he will tell you that they are pretty close to fifty years old.

The Auditor General, back in one of the reports, I think it was in 2001, when she came out with the Auditor General's report back then, said that there should be no boat amongst the provincial fleet any older than twenty years of age. Now we have several boats out there that, as far as I

am concerned, they may meet some of the requirements as regards inspections, but they have overdone their usefulness.

We have some new boats coming out now for Bell Island. We have new boats coming out now for Fogo, but we have not heard a word from the minister as regards smaller boats that they had designed I think it was back in 2000-2001, the boats that were designed by a Netherlands company, Knud E. Hansen, I think was the name of the company, that was supposed to come out and these were supposed to be the basis of the new boats that the provincial government was going to be getting and adding into the fleet. All the South Coast and some of the Northeast Coast, the smaller boats, have yet to see any replacement here and we have not heard a word from the minister on that. So, where are they? We have not seen it in this Budget.

We need to see strategic investments in boats as well. Keep in mind \$4.7 billion is what the Member for Kilbride stood up and said in royalties since 1997 and if we are a growing population, I have no doubt that we have a growing tax base. We have small businesses out there that are doing very well and contributing their share. We know that there are other means that government, of course, is raising revenue. Again, like I said, I will come back to the gas tax; \$183 million this year and the projection, every year since I looked at it, every year since 1997 that gas tax revenue has increased year over year with the exception of one year where it was about \$500,000 less, that being in the year 2003-2004.

Where do we go? Obviously when we are talking about a plan for roads, sometimes besides dealing with the cost of asphalt, I think, is probably one of the constraints that government is dealing with. I think that it is probably time that this government look a little bit more towards recycling and what we can do with regard to using our own resources when it comes to roads.

I will give you a good example of probably one of the biggest wastes of taxpayers' money when it comes to recycling, as far as I am concerned, was getting rid of the tires that we had stacked up in Argentinia. We had about \$6 million the

contract was let out for, for the disposal of tires. What happened to the tires? The tires all went off to Quebec to be burned in a Quebec factory oven up there. Instead, what we could have been doing was taking these tires as they do in the United States – and right now in the United States they have about 22,000 miles of roads. One of the things that they mix in with the asphalt to make the roads last longer is rubber from the tires. They recycle tires and they put it into roads.

We do have some resources here to drive down the cost of asphalt. We do have ways of creating jobs, creating green jobs in this Province by breaking down old rubber tires. We already know that the consumer, the taxpayer out there, is being dinged out there for \$3 a tire right now, and he or she would like to see a more constructive use of that particular item. Again, it is a resource that is already here in the Province. It is there, it is readily available, and we know what is happening to it year after year. It is going off to a Quebec factory to be burned, secondary for energy.

That is not anybody's idea of recycling, Mr. Speaker, and that is where we lose it. We think that we can take this resource – and I will call it a resource, because it is an untapped resource. It is sent out in its raw form. For example, a tire, somebody else uses it to convert it into energy, probably gets it for next to nothing, and they take it and they burn it. So they do something to the atmosphere at the same time, and they make themselves a little bit less reliant on an import of some other form of energy that they would probably be burning too. I do not think that is really responsible when it comes to that, when it comes to recycling.

I will say to government at the same time, one of the initiatives that I thought really positive about – I think it was a small initiative that government mentioned about the Multi Materials Stewardship Board, that they were going to be coming out and they are actually looking for some papers, some proposals, if you will, that will ask the government – they would get a small bit of research money from the government in order to put into various recycling projects, that sort of thing. One of those could potentially be for the recycling of tires into pavement to make our roads last

longer, and God only knows if they have been neglected for ten, fifteen years – like I said, the Auditor General says since 2003. So, we will go with eleven years.

God only knows that if eleven years ago some of these roads had tires mixed and used along with asphalt, maybe some of these roads would be lasting longer. So maybe you will not be dealing with a five-year revolving program of roads, or a seven-year revolving program for road maintenance, that sort of thing. Maybe we will be dealing with a ten-year program so that maybe, just maybe, government might be able to take that \$183 million in gas tax and take a piece of that and probably give back to municipalities where they need it; or probably be able to give to homelessness efforts, for example, in this Province, where it is sorely needed; or be able to give it to some groups like, for example, the CNIB so that they can go and they help train workers who might be disadvantaged by the lack of vision.

The vision health study, by the way, to the government, is one of the more interesting documents that I ever read about the costs for something like that, the costs to the economy, if you will, by not enfranchising somebody with the power of being able to learn because they are blind. I think that it is a vast untapped resource out there when you are talking about the need for more workers out there right now with the shortages that we have.

I want to come back and talk a little bit about that \$14.7 billion in royalties since 1997 because the member also mentioned about the Bay du Nord discoveries out in the Flemish Pass. I think that this is where it comes in when we are talking about Service NL and we are talking about safety.

I witnessed a CBC report, for example, just on the fishery, talking about the lack of on-site visits. We know that we are talking about a mobile job site. Yes, we are talking about a fishing boat, but at the same time, the lack of inspections that were happening with fishing boats. Let's go and take it further offshore when it comes to the Bay du Nord oil reserves. Let's look at the future, if you will. What is the government doing? What are they going to be able to do to ensure safety happening 400

kilometres out when they talking about – as the Member for Kilbride said – in 1,100 metres of water?

Look what happened in the Gulf of Mexico. Let's make a couple of comparisons because the first thing that we are going to be dealing with is the cleanup, no doubt. We could be talking about search and rescue, but we know that we are lacking sorely in search and rescue services. We know that. We know, as an industry, the industry itself had to go out and contract services for search and rescue. We know that we are going to have to go further out to explore for resources. We are going to need more people here to do it.

At the same time as bringing in all of that revenue, we are going to have to consider things like the safety that is going to be happening. The dangers, if you will, of operating in the North Atlantic in pretty much – I will not say uncharted waters because they are not, but in places where we have not gone before.

Let's remember going back into the Gulf of Mexico when it comes to the loss of personnel they had when the Deepwater Horizon was lost. They lost 4.9 million barrels of oil. They are still dealing with some severe issues when it comes to their coastline. We lost eleven people down there. It was no small accident.

We remember the people who we lost on the Ocean Ranger, the dangers of working in deepwater. We recognize the people that we lost on Cougar 491. We know that accidents are going to happen, but if we have the safety mechanisms and everything out there, we know that if we give it 110 per cent when it comes to worker safety out there, we would know that if we did lose somebody, it was not because we did not lack any investment into their safety. I just wanted to make government aware of that when it came to workplace health and safety.

I want to touch on something that I ran into just a couple of weeks ago. Of course, I talked about this in the House, I think it was in the last session, November or December, just before the House closed in the last session, I talked about workers and I talked about what was happening with some workers out there. I dealt, in one particular case, with a worker that I knew who

had several back surgeries and he was still out of work. He had a very invasive back surgery that was done and because of the surgery that he had, it in itself was debilitating to the point that the work that was done on him became an impediment for him to work.

At the same time as saying that, while he was suffering back pain and was lying on his back most of the time, not being able to sleep in his own bed, it came upon him to go south of the border to look for an alternative treatment. He went south, down to Florida, and ended up with another back treatment and now today he is pain free.

I want to encourage government, particularly in Service NL when it comes to workplace, health and safety, that perhaps it is time not only to look after the worker's family in this particular case, but to look after him or her as well and start to explore the safer methods of treatment. That particular treatment was not available here in Canada. At the same time this person is back on his feet and is a productive member of society. I wanted to bring that note forward as regards that.

When it comes to workers' compensation, the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission, I wanted to bring out the point of us fighting workers' compensation claims and workers who are out there trying to make a claim upon government, there are no workers out there now who are able to avail of worker representatives. There is no representation for the worker there. They have to come with their own representation here. So, what happens is that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I am going to remind hon. members if they want to have a conversation, they can certainly take it outside the Chamber.

Thank you.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you very much for the protection, as I see I only have a couple of seconds left. I want to be able to bring up the point to government that when somebody goes in to make an appeal, it is a very serious issue sometimes when somebody is thrown out of work because of a workplace injury. It would certainly be nice to see government switch around the policy when it comes to workers and have proper worker representatives there at all times to represent workers when it comes to fighting injury cases and compensation claims.

Thank you very much.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is indeed a pleasure to get up here tonight and speak on Estimates. That is what we are talking about here tonight is the Estimate Committees that are set up by government. It is a great opportunity for MHAs like myself that really do not see the inside parts of some of the departments, to see how they work and see the expertise that we have, Mr. Speaker.

I noticed no members mentioned tonight that it is amazing, every time I come here – I have been at it for six years on Estimate Committees. I have watched the ministers and am always impressed with the way the ministers give their answers, but I am really impressed with employees of our provincial government, our ADMs, people who are in charge of different departments, the job that they do, how they are so well in tune to what they are doing and the reasons why they are doing it.

Just to let people know out there, in Estimates it is a time for the Opposition, basically, to drill down. We have an Estimates book here that they come in and go line for line on everything – they are supposed to. That is what Estimates are about, but they look at different expenditures from one year to the next. Some years expenditures are up for some reason and they are down for other reasons. I tell you, it is very impressive to be here and it is very – how do I

say it – appreciative of the people who work for our government. Our public service people are top notch and the employees of this provincial government are top-notch people and they really know their work, as do our ministers.

Mr. Speaker, the Estimates Committee that we are on and the Estimates that we are talking here tonight is the general government sector and the legislative branch. Basically, there are three. It is Finance, Service Newfoundland and Labrador, and Transportation that we deal with. Like I said, the ministers come in, with their departments, and they get drilled down on the line by line and every other thing, but they also do answer policy stuff.

Mr. Speaker, I listened tonight to members of the Opposition and we are all alike. That side over there, they are negative and when I say my bit here tonight, I am going to be positive. I listened to the Member for Harbour Grace – Carbonear. I know he is a new member to this House and everything else, but again, I was out in his district – and I know he works hard for the people in his district. I know he worked hard as a mayor beforehand; but, Mr. Speaker, I tell you right now that district, when I was out there, I was kind of amazed – I almost envied it basically. I know I am getting a lot of work done down in my own district. I know that I am very pleased with what has invested in my district.

I tell you, when you look at what the Minister of Finance said tonight, \$800 million since 2003 invested in that district. You get up and complain about a road, a ditch or something like that. Granted, that is a part of your job and I would do the exact same thing –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: The former minister who was out there, a good friend of mine, the only problem that the minister had is that he is a Habs fan. That is the only problem I have with that minister who was there.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that, that district – the member said one good thing about it, one good thing he mentioned about Bryants Cove and their water getting straightened up. He did not mention anything about the long-term –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: The Member for Bay of Islands is here all night long and he is telling us not to heckle. I have not heckled one moment here tonight and I ask him to have the same respect for me. He will talk about us and heckling. I did not heckle him nor did I heckle anyone, but he brought some interesting stuff that I think we should go over. I think we should look at the long-term care facility in Carbonear. A huge investment this government has made, and an adult addiction centre in Carbonear. These are things that we do need. These are great investments in our districts.

I applaud the District of Carbonear – and the new school that is out there. I know there is an announcement for an arena, that is between you fellows out there how to figure all that out, but I know we have a beautiful one down our way. I hope that you get the same type of arena that we have in our district.

Mr. Speaker, this government – when I look at different members – we have been investing in every district in this Province. The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair got up – I have a new school in my district. I am very appreciative. We are going to get another new school, Mr. Speaker. It was announced in the Budget this year, but she got two. There is \$6.6 million getting invested in the school that is there to finish the construction this year, so that will be three new schools.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is easy to get up and say I am not getting the roadwork done. I am not getting this done. There is water going across the road, but that is happening in all of our districts. I do not think that there is a member in this House of Assembly who can get up, since 2003, and say my district was neglected, there was not one cent spent in it, you did nothing in my district, because it is not true.

When I look around this Province, I look at the investments we did – I remember one news release I went to with the Department of Transportation and we were looking at all of the investments. They had a map up there, with little dots all over the place. The thing that amazed me, it was in every area of this Province. This government has invested in rural

Newfoundland and we are going to continue. We are going to continue to invest in –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: You get up in your time and say what you have to say.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members to direct their comments to the Chair. I ask other members to please acknowledge and respect the person who is on their feet and recognized by the Speaker, and please listen in silence.

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

I will address my remarks to you.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at different areas of the Province, like I said, we are doing major investments. I am going to just say a few words about each one of the departments that we had the opportunity to look at in Estimates and listen to what the ministers had to say and look at the investments that were done. I will talk a little bit about a few investments that are in my area. It is amazing sometimes, when you look at some of these departments, we do not realize how big they are and what they really do.

The first one I am going to look at is the Department of Transportation. I know the minister was up and he said about the ask. I know in my district I would love to have \$20 million worth of roadwork. I would like to have every culvert, every bridge, every road paved, right on through from St. John's right down to the end of the cape and over to Bauline and everywhere else. Mr. Speaker, I have to be realistic of the amount of work that is going to be done in my district.

This year, there is \$81 million worth of upgrades in roadwork and bridge work and everything else, but an important part that the minister did mention, he did mention that tenders were out earlier. Myself and the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island had our news release a couple of weeks ago and both of ours, I think,

are going in the same package. I spoke to some of the contractors that were asking me about it, and they are so excited. Usually this happens that they do not get out until probably August and then by the time it gets done, it is September and then we have one month to probably get it done. We end up getting these following years – it rolls over, carry-over to the following year. I am hoping that there will be no carry-overs this year.

Area roads that I am going to get done, it is not exactly what I want. Like I said, I want \$25 million, but I am going to get \$1 million or \$1.1 million or something like that. I am very pleased with it. I hope all the members in the House will get a bit of roadwork done in their districts. I know some districts have more roadwork than others. Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, this lady right here, she is all the time advocating for her area because she has a lot more roadwork than I do. I hope that the people in that area will be satisfied with what they have, but I can tell the people in that area and I can tell the people in most areas that their members are advocating on their behalf and working very hard to get what we have.

Mr. Speaker, we would love to have all the money in the world. We would love to have that magic wand, boom, and do all the roadwork down in Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, do all the roadwork out in Harbour Main, but we do not have it. We have to be very smart with what we are doing and we have to be able to do a bit at a time. We would love to – if the money was there, I am sure we could do all the roadwork we wanted to, but the Department of Transportation has a lot of investments to make.

I mentioned this earlier with their vessel replacement – and I had the opportunity again, I said it before, I went down to Portugal Cove and was there for the announcement for the Bell Island ferry. I saw how excited the people were. I know the same thing is happening out in Fogo Island, in that area, that they are so excited about the new ferry they have coming. That is not something that we can just, boom, put that ferry in service. We cannot do it; we would love to do it.

My mother is from Joe Batt's Arm, by the way. I had the opportunity to go over to Joe Batt's

Arm, stayed over there, what a beautiful spot, absolutely beautiful part of the Island and if anybody ever gets the opportunity to go over there, it is absolutely gorgeous and one of the nicest places I was ever to in my life. They deserve a new ferry. The people from Bell Island deserve a new ferry.

This year, we are investing \$76.3 million to try to get our ferry situation straightened up. Would we like to do all ferries in the Province? Yes, we would. We would like to have all new ferries in the Province, no doubt about it; but again, the almighty dollar, it depends what you have there. If you can spend your money – there is a budget and we are trying to do the best we can. We are putting money in our roads, we are putting money in our ferry systems, and we are replacing bridges.

I know the hon. Member for St. John's East was up talking about bridgework. I will talk a little bit about bridgework. In my district, Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, the bridge down in Outer Cove, going down by the beach down there was, it was not even on my list to get done; but anyway, when I went over to the Department of Transportation and met with the minister, it was brought to the concern of the Department of Transportation that it was a safety issue. They showed pictures of big slabs that were after falling off the bridge down there and the bridge needed to be replaced.

Now, I was hoping to get roadwork done here and roadwork done there, but that bridge work cost \$2.5 million. So, guess what? That was a priority for the Department of Transportation. My roadwork, while I wanted to get the ruts fixed on Piperstock Hill and this done in another place, the priority had to go to safety, and that is what the Department of Transportation has to do.

If there is an issue out there with safety – they replaced that bridge. I think it took almost two years to do it, a beautiful bridge down there now and a lot of people go down to the beach. I know a lot of people when they use the recreational fishery in that area, they put their boats down on the thing – that is where they go off over on the other side. We call it the Outer Cove shore. That is where they go fishing. It is

a great spot to get a few fish, Mr. Speaker. There are lots of fish down there.

That bridge needed to be done, it was barred off, nobody could go down there – and again if somebody did happen to go down there and one of these slabs of concrete happened to fall off, that is our responsibility when we find out these things.

Another bridge that was replaced in my district was down in Savage Creek. This one, Mr. Speaker, was a little bit different. The government and the Department of Transportation partnered with the City of St. John's. When it came out that the department met and there was a lot of flooding in the area – actually the town was cut off a couple of times because where this bridge is to it is right in the middle of the town and when we have major flooding, the water was coming down and it used to wash right out over the road. The town was basically shut off, but it was determined by the City of St. John's actually when they did their flood-risk analysis, that all this development on Stavanger Drive and Torbay Road area was increasing the amount of water that was in these rivers.

What happened was the government and the Town of Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove approached the City of St. John's and the City of St. John's partnered with the government 50-50 and replaced the bridge. It cost us \$750,000 and now the bridge is down there and the people who are along that road there are very, very pleased, but that was something that had to be done. I am sure that most of the bridgework if it comes down to a safety issue or an issue like this, there is no doubt where our priorities will be. While there is a lot of bridges and while there is a lot of things have to be replaced, safety always comes first when it comes to the Department of Transportation.

Mr. Speaker, I am just going to speak a little bit about some of the roadwork getting done in my district and the little bit of roadwork that was done in the last little while. In Torbay, there was some roadwork done on the Bauline Line. The road was in hard old shape up there. There were a lot of areas where they were putting in the water and sewer over the years and it was up and down all over the place.

That was done from the Kinsmen Centre right into the Torbay Bypass Road. On the Piperstock Hill, one of the ones I wanted to get done first when I was elected, there used to be water running down in the ruts. If you had a lot of rain, I tell you it was like two rivers running down the hill. That has all been fixed. We have nice shoulders on the side of the road now. It took a little bit of time, but we got it done.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at transportation needs in my district – and I know every time I get up I probably say something about it, and that is the investment government made in the Torbay Bypass Road. What that has done to the whole area is unbelievable. I would say 50 per cent of the traffic coming up out of Torbay in the mornings use the bypass road and 50 per cent is on the other road. The other road, basically the main road coming up out of Torbay, is where the school is located.

Every morning before the bypass road there would be a lineup of traffic all the way back right on back to Torbay, probably about five or six kilometres of traffic every single morning. Every morning you listen to CBC News, or VOXM, or one of those and they give their road report, they say it is slow-moving traffic on Piperstock Hill.

Mr. Speaker, we invested \$23 million and last year I never heard once about slow-moving traffic on Piperstock Hill. That was a great investment. Not only that, it opened up the whole area. If I look at development in the towns where I live in Flatrock, in Pouch Cove, in Bauline and Torbay, we are after increasing in population alone by 20 per cent in the last four years. It is a great place.

I encourage anybody looking for a new home or a place to live to come down. It is the most beautiful district in the Province as far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker. We have great schools down there. We have great recreation facilities down there. We have great fishing down there if anyone wants to catch a cod fish. I invite all the hon. members to come down, I have a boat, I will take you out any time at all in the food fishery – not any time at all; I am not illegal.

Mr. Speaker, it is because of the investments that this government has done that the whole

area is really doing well. When you see growth in small towns, like a town like Bauline, when you see their growth going up by 20 per cent and their budgets increasing by so much money – I know when I was Mayor of Flatrock, which was six years ago, our budget was maybe \$680,000. This year for the first time the Budget went up to over \$1 million.

For a small community to be able to have \$1 million in their budget to spend on the things that they want to do, there are a lot of things they want to do. They just put a new playground in down there. They invested a lot of money in a playground. Right now, they are looking at building their own garage. They have a garage, but they want a bigger one because they are hoping on getting a loader someday – and their snow clearing is second to none. They are planning on investing in their community. It is the same thing with the Town of Torbay, the same thing with Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove. Our economy, I mean we listen to all the negative stuff that is said all the time – negative, negative, negative – but you know what, Mr. Speaker? I believe that there is more positive than negative.

Now, I thought I was only going to be up here for a little while, but I want to talk a little bit about Service NL. Mr. Speaker, when you come to the Estimates of Service NL, the one thing that amazes me so much, people look at different departments in government – we look at Finance, we look at Transportation, we look at Municipal Affairs, Education, and everything else. I am not sure, but I believe it is one of the largest departments in government, because there is so much getting done. This department has you from the time you are born until the time you die. That is it. There is everything in the department.

I know that some of the things I wanted to talk about in Service NL was the different things that they do related to safety – I am looking for my notes here now, Mr. Speaker, but I know they do a lot with safety. The Queen's Printer, for example, downstairs where they do all the printing for government, I had the opportunity, I spoke one time before on a bill that was here in government, and I have to tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that people who work down in the Queen's Printer – because I

know; I was there a lot of time – are fantastic people.

There are a lot of times when the Budget needs to be done and different documents need to be done and they are there in the nighttime making sure that everything gets there to people. Sometimes people are expecting all these documents at 8:30 in the morning and we do not realize how our public service and how our public employees put so much time and effort to make sure that we get things on time and different departments get things on time.

Again, I mentioned Vital Statistics. Again, a very important part – anybody who needs a birth certificate or anything at all, that is part of it. Also, Mr. Speaker, you look at safety – and I know that the hon. Member for St. John's East mentioned about the legislation that came in here, the move-over safety, and I had to get up and speak on it. It is important that we realize that we have to make sure we take care of, especially our peace officers that are on the road every day, and other people who are out there working on the roads that they are working in a safe environment. That was a good piece of legislation that came in here.

Mr. Speaker, in some rural parts there a lot of centres – I do not know how many there are. There are government centres in different parts of the Province, and it is like a one-stop shopping for people to go get their permits and different licences and approval for inspections and building safety codes, and everything else that you need to know from government services, that is there. Mr. Speaker, this is a very important department, and I said most of the legislation – I think a lot of does, anyway – that comes into this government here is tweaking that department and making sure that the people get the best possible service that they can.

Mr. Speaker, the last department that I am going to speak about is Finance. I could have used my full twenty minutes just on Finance, basically, because if you look at what the Finance department does – I only have one-and-a-half minutes, and I just want to talk about where we have come from. Mr. Speaker, we have come so far in this Province. I am looking at our income; our weekly income for people in this Province is the highest it ever was. Mr. Speaker, we are

second in all of Canada when it comes to the income for household families and the income that people are making.

I know there was a stat I heard earlier about car sales. All you have to do is just drive around Newfoundland – and it is not only in St. John's; it is all over this Province. People are investing money because they have more money to invest.

Mr. Speaker, that is the result of the investments our government have made in most of these projects that we are doing. People are having the opportunity to work. It is great time for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and it is a great time for our young people.

Mr. Speaker, our young people are going out there, they are getting well-paying jobs, and they are getting jobs in engineering. I never saw so many engineers before in my district. Every young person, I think, today that I talk to, you say: What are you doing in MUN? I am doing engineering. It is a great opportunity. The opportunities are here.

I look down at the young people in my district and I thank this government from them and say listen, thanks for giving me the opportunity to do what I do. Because only for the investments that we are making as a government, they would not have the opportunity to get out to Hibernia, or go out to Long Harbour, or go to these different areas.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up and I just want to thank you. Again, we are doing great things in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, you can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time and that is where this government is today. This government has been fooling people with their numbers, with their card games, their card tricks, about how the economy of the Province has performed and continues to perform under this government.

Where are we today, with today's Budget? Actually, it was a relief tonight that we were going to do Concurrence. It gives us an opportunity to actually talk about the Budget. Initially, one of the members did talk about the financial indicators in the Province, and then it seemed to go downhill after that.

Where we are today in this year's Budget is approximately a half a billion dollar projected deficit. That is \$1,000 for every man, woman and child in the Province, but it gets worse than that because this government has had to borrow a billion dollars so they could have a half a billion dollar deficit. A billion dollar loan is another \$2,000 per man, woman and child, so that really means, Mr. Speaker, that we are going backwards this year by \$3,000 per man, woman and child in this Province and that is the government's own numbers. That is not my numbers, that is not numbers from an economist, that is the actual numbers projected by this government in this Budget.

The government keeps playing a shell game with what they say is while the net debt is getting better all the time, we have these assets over here and we have these assets over there, so even though we owe more money – we may well owe more money than we have owed in this Province maybe historically. They say we have certain debts to offset against it. Mr. Speaker, to me, that is like somebody who has to go off and borrow – I do not know how much an orthodontist costs today, but twenty-five years or so ago when I was paying for an orthodontist, it was fairly expensive. Let's say it is \$10,000, \$15,000 for an orthodontist, for the taxpayer's child. Now the taxpayer borrows \$10,000 or \$15,000 and says well, I am not really any worse off because even though I owe \$10,000 or \$15,000, my kids have really nice teeth.

Well, I am not saying that the child should not have nice teeth, but I am saying we are only deluding ourselves when we say – and by we, I mean the government – that actually we are no worse off because even though we owe a whole lot more money, we have a whole lot more stuff. What kind of stuff are we talking about? Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the items of stuff that we are talking about is a hydroelectric development that is going to cost eight, ten, twelve, nine, eleven, billions and billions and billions of

dollars and that asset, we cannot eat that asset. We cannot put it in the bank. It is there to generate electricity. It is there to generate electricity that we do not need and that nobody else wants.

The reason nobody else wants it is because of the declining price of electricity related in large part to the extra production of shale gas in the United States. The actual price has been declining as we are rushing in to borrow all sorts of money so we can have a development. So even though we will owe more money, we will have a nice asset, but the asset will not produce any income for us. It will not give us any revenue. The revenue that government is talking about is selling certain amounts that people may need on the spot market in North America after we get through the line – the line, which is going across to Nova Scotia, is a 500 megawatt line which is less power than Bay d'Espoir generates. Of the 500 megawatt line, the Nova Scotians will have 170 megawatts and we will have 330 megawatts that we would be able to sell from time to time if somebody wants it, if they do not already have a surplus themselves, if all of those hydroelectric developments in Quebec that Quebec is selling power for as little as a nickel a kilowatt when we are going to be paying fifteen or twenty cents a kilowatt. Mr. Speaker, to generate a commodity like electricity and then sell it for less than the price to generate makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, one of the items that this Budget includes is a package, a book on the economy. If we look at where we have come so far in this Province in the last ten years, we now have the most bloated government per capita in Canada. It costs more to govern this Province than any other province in Canada and that is today with a billion dollar loan this year and a half a billion dollar deficit.

If we look to the government's own economic indicators, we can see where we are headed. Reading this document over the next two or three years or three or four years, it is almost like reading the book of Revelation if you want to look and see where the government says we will be in the next few years. If we look at the drop in our GDP over the past year, our GDP in the past year into 2014 has dropped from the highest in Canada to the second lowest in

Canada. The Canadian 2014 average GDP will be 2.3 per cent. Our Province will be 1.3 per cent. We will be in second-last place in Gross Domestic Product in 2014, slightly ahead of New Brunswick and behind every other province.

Mr. Speaker, that is shameful for a government that has had so much revenue for the last decade, so much revenue to deal with. Our GDP around 1.3 per cent in 2014 stacks up against Alberta with 3.5 per cent, Saskatchewan for 2.4 per cent, and BC for 2.4 per cent. The members of this government tend to brag about the past accomplishments when, really, little has been accomplished, except to collect oil revenues generated from projects they had nothing to do with and spend those revenues.

Mr. Speaker, to continue on, more troubling is if we look at where our economic growth has come from in the last few years. If we look at major project development – and this is the government's book; this is not me saying anything that government has not produced. They have produced the book for us to read. People should read what our major products will look like from now until 2017.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the number of people who will be employed in major projects in 2014, it is approximately 10,000 people; next year, 9,500; and in 2016, 5,500 people – 4,000 people drop from 2015 to 2016, and then it gets worse. It goes down another 2,500 people. In the year 2017, we are forecast to have 3,000 people employed in major projects from 10,000 people employed in major projects this year. What has government done to replace that level of economic development?

Big projects, Mr. Speaker, take time to come on, and we see no big projects developing. That is the declining employment level in this Province over the next three years, as projected by this government. This is their own numbers. If we look at the investment in major project capital investments, 2014, \$7.5 billion; next year, \$7 billion; the following year it drops to \$4.5 billion; and the following year, \$2.75 billion.

MR. KIRBY: This is a good news story (inaudible).

MR. J. BENNETT: This is the good news story, Mr. Speaker, of this Budget for this government. They had to borrow a billion dollars so they could have a half a billion dollar deficit. So, we are in the high times right now and this is what government is forecasting for the future in the next two or three years for this Province.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at the economic indicators found on page 16, if we look at the change in Gross Domestic Product it is on a straight slide downward over the next three years, and if we look at one of the key critical indicators for economic growth or the health of any economy is housing starts. In 2012 there were approximately 3,800; 2013, a little over 2,800; another 2,800 this year; and housing starts will decline by one-third from now until 2017.

As of today, there will be a thousand fewer housing starts three years from now. What will happen to all of the people who were employed in building homes? What will happen to all of the people who have borrowed for businesses in order to have these businesses, these companies, build homes? How will they replace the revenue? How will they be able to stay in our Province?

Well clearly, Mr. Speaker, they will not stay in our Province, because this government, after having a miscalculation over the last half a dozen years on the amount of population, the number of people we have in the Province, we are looking at a leveling off and then a gradual slide in population. I know that somebody said BS when told the population decline is coming, but this is the government's own numbers. They are forecasting a steady decline over the next three, four, five years.

Mr. Speaker, the employment level in this Province from 232,000 this year, it will go up slightly in 2014 from 2013 and then that also will slide. From 2015-2016 it will slide by 8,000 fewer people employed; from 2016-2017, 4,800 fewer people employed. Mr. Speaker, over the next four years we are forecast to have 13,700 fewer people employed in this Province, and this is supposed to be a good news story of a government that borrows money to break even

and, in fact, do not break even. They still fall a half a billion dollars behind.

Mr. Speaker, one of the real tragedies of our time, we will look back on the gross fiscal mismanagement of this Province by this government. We have had nearly \$20 billion in oil revenues in less than the last decade and we have accumulated debt and accumulated debt and accumulated debt. When I hear ministers speak and say yes, we know the roads are pretty bad and we need to do something about it and we are doing the best we can. I think the voters are going to say: Doing the best you can just is not good enough.

We know that we have some awful roads all over the Province. Government says they are spending this money here and spending that money there. It seems like every time there is a criticism government members, and particularly Cabinet ministers, say but we are spending this money here; we are spending that money there. In fact, spending more is not necessarily spending more wisely. It is not necessarily getting better results, and it certainly is not the way to go.

Mr. Speaker, this Province is in a straight economic decline, a straight population decline, and we are in a time of unprecedented wealth. When this government came to power the Budget was approximately \$4 billion. Today it is more than \$7 billion. There has been an 80 per cent or 90 per cent increase in revenue, and what has happened to it? A large amount of that money has been purely wasted. It has been wasted by increasing the size of government. It seems like even in the time of what you would think would be a fiscal restraint, government within the last handful of days, decided to increase the size of the Cabinet. We have gone with even a bigger Cabinet in a time of a half a billion dollar deficit.

Mr. Speaker, the allocation of Cabinet positions seems to be some sort of a retrenching. It is almost like we are in some sort of a Third-World government who needs to give somebody a title because having a title is going to make somebody feel better. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as we grow the size of government, not only do we grow the current liability, in addition to growing the current liability, we grow the future liability

and that future liability is for pension liability, it is for extended health benefits for people for the rest of their lives. Mr. Speaker, it seems like absolutely no thought goes into the proper and sound fiscal management of this government. It seems like if there is a problem, spend more. If that does not fix the problem, spend even more. If that does not fix the problem, announce even more programs.

There are categories in the Budget where funds are allocated year after year after year and not spent. There are categories in the Budget where the government picks a number as if, I guess, we will put in this number here. How much are we going to spend? Well, we do not really know because we have not actually figured it out, but we will let you know next year how much we spent.

Estimates have been way off track for so long that they should not even be called Estimates. Mr. Speaker, an estimate should be that somebody actually takes stock of the situation, puts some thought to it and decides then what would be the most appropriate or the most realistic number to arrive at a particular situation. Then you estimate and then you recalculate as you go forward.

The type of fiscal mismanagement that we have seen in this Province has been showcased in this Province in the last couple of weeks with the revelations about the Humber Valley Paving scandal. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is a scandal. The government entered into a contract in 2012, it should have been completed sometime in 2013, an extension was required, an extension was requested; and the contract, which was tabled, clearly said that there is a process, there is a mechanism which says that if for any reason enumerated in a certain set of reasons, ordinarily referred to as force majeure reasons, then the contractor should come to the government with written notice and based on that written notice, government will provide an extension and would consider providing some sort of relief. The company came and asked for that.

The company came and said because we lost a few weeks in the middle of the summer or early in the summer of 2013, we are going to get a one-year extension. Less than a year later, the company is back knocking on the government's

door saying: We are really losing a lot of money on that contract. Will you please, please let us out of the contract?

Government says that we have protected the interest of the taxpayers, but I do not know how. When people enter into contracting, particularly in large capital projects, in order to be able to bid for a large capital project it is necessary for a company to be able to acquire bonding. The bonding company provides a fidelity bond which says that yes, for this reason or for that reason we will agree that if you cannot finish the job, we will come in and finish the job. For that, you pay a fee. This is not uncommon in the construction industry. As a matter of fact, it is the norm.

The bonding company says: We will say to the owner – and the owner in this case is the government – if they cannot finish, we will finish. We will hire somebody else to come and finish that job and we will back charge that on our customer who is the insured, who is the person who is covered under that bond, in this case Humber Valley Paving.

What happened? What happened is that having had the security of having not one but two bonds totalling \$19 million, without providing any reasonable inquiries into the reason for the required release from the contract, without looking to find out how many people had their hands out who were owed money by this contractor, without having as far as we can tell at this point – because answers are scarce. Without having a statutory declaration sworn by a representative from the company to say we owe no money, we are free and clear, without having all of the cards on the table and as a result of the answers provided by the Premier of the Province in the last few days, without even the knowledge of the Premier, the key player in our Province did not even know that somebody was being let out of the contract which was worth millions of dollars. Mr. Speaker, how is that going to come back to the taxpayers?

In contracting, one of the key factors, one of the key prices in a contract is the cost to mobilize and demobilize. It means getting everything on site and getting it up and running, and it means tidying up and cleaning up the job at the end of it. Most people can understand that, can figure it

out quite clearly. If you have to get on site you have to assemble equipment, you have to hire staff, you have to get aggregate, and you have to get your bonding in place. You need to put the job into place and you have to wind it down at the end.

Does this mean now that because the government permitted this company to get out of this contract and release them from the bond, that we, the taxpayers, have to pay all over again for the mobilization costs? What will that be? Where is the financial clarity? Where is the openness?

I appreciate that the Premier said he has written to and requested the Auditor General to review the situation. Based on the Auditor General's reports of the last two or three years, there has been a chronic refrain in the Auditor General's reports which says due to lack of documentation I am not saying that they did anything wrong, I am just saying there were inadequate controls. There were insufficient controls.

There was the Roddickton pellet plant, which is the forestry diversification program. There was the College of the North Atlantic, Western Regional Health Authority, Centre for Health Information. That is just in the past year. The Auditor General keeps saying we cannot really audit properly because you did not put these controls in place. So if these controls were not put in place for all these agencies and the minister is unable to provide any satisfactory explanation with the protection of the House of Assembly, what will there be to audit, and how much money have we lost, and is this just another example of the gross fiscal mismanagement of this Province by this government? Mr. Speaker, I guess we will have to wait and see.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, maybe it is the lateness of the evening, but I do not know if I understood anything that happened in the last twenty minutes. I have to be honest with you. It is good to be able to get up and speak here on Concurrence with Government Services, but I

have said on a couple of occasions when I got up to speak: I have more hope for Newfoundland and Labrador than the party across the way has, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that: I have more hope.

This weekend I had the pleasure of having our next leader down on the Burin Peninsula. One of the things I said to him – because sometimes people put the message out there that it seems that only the Avalon, and the Northeast Avalon in particular, is the only area in the Province that seems to be doing well. I think they hope if they preach it enough that people will somehow come to agree with it.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you, and I told him, that rural Newfoundland –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: Will you tell the big man just to calm it down, Mr. Speaker, while I have a few words? I respect him when he is up speaking, and I would ask that he do the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, I said to him, and I have said to people before: Rural Newfoundland is doing quite well. If you come and you spend time on the peninsula and go to my colleague, the Member for Grand Bank, and you travel down to my district and then finish off the peninsula in the MHA for Bellevue's district, Mr. Speaker, you will find that our areas are doing quite well. These are rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. I am sure my fellow colleagues who sit behind me and sit beside me in this House on this side, we believe and we see evidence of it that rural Newfoundland and Labrador is doing quite well, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: I want to point out just a couple of things. Mr. Speaker, we toured the Cow Head facility, which is the fabrication of one of the modules for the Hebron project. I had thought there was something around 500 people working there. In fact, there are about 700 tradespeople, another eighty or ninety working in the offices, so there is about 800-plus people working down there. The thing that struck me,

quite opposite as to what the Member for St. Barbe talked about, what struck me with this tour – and I have toured it several times – is you are seeing more young people working on that site.

Mr. Speaker, when he talks about the future for the young people in our Province, these are young people working on a project right here in Newfoundland and Labrador because of benefits this government negotiated around Hebron. Then, if you take from that site, and I will go down to the Member for Placentia and look at how many people are working at Long Harbour, then look into Bull Arm, these are projects that are happening right here in Newfoundland and Labrador employing the majority of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker, and it bodes well for the future.

As much as some people might want to discount the fishery, Mr. Speaker, I am not one of them. I served in the Department of Fisheries for two years. I will say that it is one of my proudest moments in government because I do believe that the future of the fishery in this Province is bright. There are not going to be as many people into it, but those people who are into the fishery will do quite well and it will serve this Province quite well. There is absolutely no doubt about it.

We met this past weekend with the Burin council, we met with the council in Marystown, and we met with some people in the northern part of the district to see what is happening there around health care. A new clinic is being built in the northern part of my district that will serve my district and the Member for Bellevue and his residents who live on the Burin Peninsula.

It was very obvious; one of the things that struck me with the folks who live in, I would say, one of the rural parts of my district is that a clinic is being built there and how they are looking to work to attract a physician, how they will work with Eastern Health to attract a physician to a rural part of this Province so that they are provided with quality health care, Mr. Speaker. It is as simple as that.

Do not go out there and tell these people that their area is dead. Do not go down around Springdale and tell them that their area is dead

or go to Central Newfoundland, or on the West Coast or up in Labrador.

AN HON. MEMBER: Much alive.

MR. JACKMAN: Much alive with many people working, making good incomes, never like it before in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I have five children. I joke with people. I say: We have done our part for population growth; we have twelve grandchildren. We are doing our part; but my children, four of them are working here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and one is commuting back and forth to Alberta. You do not hear him complaining about it; you do not hear me complaining about it. We are making our way in this Province, and they will continue to make their way in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say, when the Member for St. Barbe got up and spoke about Muskrat Falls, I think one of the best things about Muskrat Falls is that it provides clean energy. The Member for St. Barbe, no doubt about it, is a learned man. I am sure – he did not mention it – he has heard of the latest report that has come out on climate change. He must have. Anybody who is in the know and looking at our weather patterns and whatnot will know that our climate is changing and it is because of manmade pollutions, pollutants that are making our air quality and creating these catastrophic weather patterns.

For years, we have seen it happen in other parts of the world, but recently we have seen it happen in our own Province. We can look back to Igor, look at the downpours that we have had over the past couple years and how that has impacted the infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the member has to recognize that Muskrat Falls provides clean energy. It is the type of project that if we are going to see the reversal of climate change, these are the types of projects that we need on our radar. These are the types of projects that will do away with pollution emitters like the one that is out in the Foxtrap area.

We know what that was emitting. We know that when Muskrat Falls comes online, Mr. Speaker,

that will close down. For my children and the children of this Province – and we even need to think a little bit bigger than that, for the children of the world – these are the types of projects that will reverse the impacts of climate change.

It certainly will be an economic generator for the Province, Mr. Speaker. If you are talking about a legacy project, this is one of the legacies that will see the future of our children bright, as it generates revenue. I think equally and probably in the long run more important is what it is doing for the environment and that it is cleaning it up.

We, as a small Province, when we look at the global numbers, the global population and looking at our Province of 500,000 people, to realize that we can develop a project of this nature that contributes to countering what is happening in terms of climate change. I think all of us on each side of this House – the folks in Opposition are not going to admit it, but from myself as a minister being a part of this government, it would be one of the things that I will walk away from government saying I was proud to be a part of, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you that. At no point will I ever say that this project was not the right one to do. I can honestly say that.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for St. Barbe talking about that we are a government of no accomplishments. You just have to shake your head; it makes you wonder. You have to shake your head and just wonder where the member is coming from.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is shocking.

MR. JACKMAN: Somebody is over there saying shocking. Yes, I have to agree with him; it is shocking.

Just take a look at some of the things that we have been able to implement over the past ten years, Mr. Speaker. He is right. He is right in one aspect, Mr. Speaker. He did recognize that we are a government that have made some very wise decisions and because of it, we have generated revenue; and, then we have invested them. We have invested them. I will start by speaking about the fisheries.

One of the things we did as a Department of Fisheries, Mr. Speaker, was to invest in research. The new member from Carbonear would recognize, him being a fisherman, is one of the things we were never quite certain about is exactly what was happening in our waters. We were doing some sentinel fisheries; we were doing some pieces of research. We know the federal government have moved away, very much, from the research.

Mr. Speaker, what did we do? We went and leased a research vessel, the *Celtic Explorer*, to go out and spend weeks out on the Atlantic researching so we could have some answers. Mr. Speaker, I think it is one of the better things we have done in the fisheries.

Dr. George Rose, who spent these years on that boat, did the research, led some researchers. I am very pleased to say – the first year we entered into it we did not have people from our own Province who were on there, because we did not have them. Do you know why we did not have them? It is because parents were discouraging their children from going into the fisheries, Mr. Speaker. People in our own Province were saying to their sons and daughters: Don't go into the fishery, there is not a future there.

The member for Mount Pearl may not know it, Mr. Speaker, the man has never stepped foot in a boat, I doubt, but for someone who is living in rural Newfoundland, and the member from Carbonear would know, there is a future in the fishery. There indeed is a future. Some of the people –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. JACKMAN: He knows what fish and chips are, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to some of the younger fellows who are serving and getting into the boats in my community, do not tell them there is no future in the fishery. They are out there fishing now and they will be fishing into the future. There is absolutely no doubt about that. A large part of it is that we continue to do the research so we know exactly what is happening out in that water.

We know some people are expressing some concerns in certain areas. Up on the Northeast Coast they know what they are facing in terms of the crab stocks. We see what is happening with the shrimp stocks. We should not be in a position where we guess. We should be more in a position where we carry out the research and we know exactly what is happening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another accomplishment; I am in a portfolio now of Child, Youth and Family Services. One of the things we will be remembered for is identifying a department specifically to deal with children and youth. Why? It is because we are not only playing lip service to it.

Mr. Speaker, we have often, many of us – I bet you every member in this House has gotten up and said that our most valuable resource is our children. Well, Mr. Speaker, an accomplishment of this government is we have put in place a Department of Child, Youth and Family Services focusing solely on what is in the best interest of the children. A new department four, four-and-a-half-years old, that still is figuring out its way in certain files and certain pieces of legislation and whatnot, but the direction in which it was established and a ten-year strategy that will continue will see a better provision of services for children and youth in this Province.

I will go back to the department I was previously in and look at what this government has done for education, and I have repeated it. People will say they are tired of hearing me say it, but I am going to say it. I have said it, and I am going to say it again. Look at the infrastructure we have put in place in this Province.

As someone stood up earlier and spoke about, it is not only in Conservative districts that we have built new schools. We have built schools where they needed to be built, Mr. Speaker. We built schools where they needed to be built in Labrador, on the Avalon where we have seen increased population. We built schools in Gander. Mr. Speaker, wherever there was the need, that is where we have gone.

I believe the latest, when I left, Mr. Speaker, there was something like fifty-one major

projects going on. I think there are nine schools in the works now. Twelve, I believe, have been built. The projects I am speaking about are not something like \$100,000 to put in ten windows, Mr. Speaker. These are million dollar projects; \$2 million, \$3 million, \$4 million projects that will see our children in infrastructure as good as and better than any other jurisdiction in Canada, I will say to you, Mr. Speaker. I will say that.

Then, I cannot help but repeating and I have said it here before, to those members who were in education to look where we have moved in terms of textbooks. No charges for textbooks; the elimination of school fees; the introduction of full-day Kindergarten. Mr. Speaker, all initiatives aimed at making a better education system for the children in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I was at the opening of some of these facilities in Baie Verte and out in Carbonear, and I will tell you it is worth anyone's while to walk into those facilities and see what is now offered to our children. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I always looked for when I went into school is to see what is happening in terms of the theatre arts and the music programs. Go into the music rooms.

I went into a school in Goose Bay when we had the junior high students taking out their instruments and starting on a new music program. The comments I heard there and the comments I hear around the Province – I heard from one lady who was a retired teacher who commented on it. She could not get over how much resources there were for these programs in the schools now compared to when she was there. Mr. Speaker, why? Because we recognize the importance of the arts.

We recognize the importance of the arts and we have quality teachers, Mr. Speaker. We have quality teachers who provide for education day in and day out. So we have kept the class caps, Mr. Speaker. We have kept the class caps in place. It is all about providing the best quality education that we can for the students of this Province. Whether it be Child, Youth and Family Services or Education, Mr. Speaker, our goal is about directing resources to what we have all spoken about as our most valuable resources, that being our students.

I will close by saying that as much as the Opposition sometimes will try to point out that there is doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker, we on this side are optimistic and we know that the future of this Province is bright and people will be working and living in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for debate on Concurrence on the Government Services Committee has now expired. You have all heard the debate.

Is the report concurred in?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The report is passed.

On motion, Report of Government Services Estimates Committee, carried.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I move, seconded by the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 1, An Act Respecting Public Interest Disclosure.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole and that I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Verge): Order, please!

The Committee of the Whole will now consider Bill 1.

A bill, "An Act Respecting Public Interest Disclosure". (Bill 1)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak again to Bill 1 in Committee, An Act Respecting Public Interest Disclosure.

During debate I took basically the full hour of my time to speak to the legislation, and a number of my colleagues had spoken to the legislation as well. I have some additional things I would like to put forward before the House in the Committee process on the whistleblower legislation.

One of the things that was discussed is not only the length of time that it took, but I want to talk about – and I believe one of my colleagues had talked about an article in *The Telegram*, an editorial on how this basically is a piece of copycat legislation. If I get to the point, there are very similar comparisons to New Brunswick. It had talked about that Newfoundland's proposed bill has twenty-nine sections. Twenty-one of them are word for word matches of the seven-year-old New Brunswick legislation.

Without going back and reiterating anything that was said in comparing the actual legislation clause for clause, I could do that but instead what I am looking at here is let's look at New

Brunswick, because I have listened to other members across the House – I believe maybe it was the Member for Bonavista South – talk about how good this legislation was, and others talking about comparing with other provinces. Well, we want to look at New Brunswick since it is very, very similar and basically scrutinize it a little bit because that is important when you are looking at the committee phase.

We need to look at the New Brunswick provincial government. When it introduced its legislation in 2007 it was basically meant to prevent employees from being punished if they blew the whistle on bosses and colleagues who are breaking the laws. Similarly, beyond civil servants in government departments, the bill also would protect employees of hospital authorities, school boards, Crown corporations. In New Brunswick's case it included their utility company, NB Power, just as this piece of legislation would include Nalcor.

There was a real approval of this legislation from the New Brunswick Union of Public and Private Employees saying that this is a very good thing because you need to make sure it is a step forward. It is a step forward to protect employees, but in order to do that you need to make sure the legislation has the appropriate protocols and mechanisms in place that truly does protect employees.

If we look at the intent of the legislation, the copycat legislation that this government took seven years to introduce. Let's see where the New Brunswick legislation sits. If we go back to a report by the CBC in February, 2013, that the acting Ombudsman says only seven calls were received last year and that it has barely been used. The New Brunswick whistleblower law was barely used in the five years since it was introduced for all of the civil servants to report illegal or dangerous actions by their co-workers, according to the province that was acting in the role as the Ombudsman.

If we look at the case that it was barely used, and New Brunswick has a dual option, with just a single option for us to go to the Office of the Citizens' Representative, I wonder how many calls that office is going to field. We heard it before in other pieces of legislation, whether it be Bill 29 where there was continuous requests,

they could not deal with all of those numbers, but really those amounted to about eleven requests per week. Last year, already there has only been a couple of hundred or so requests, as the minister who introduced the bill stated.

The whistleblower legislation in New Brunswick, passed in 2007, was monitored by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and that justice was not busy prior. We look at 2010, there were just eleven inquires about the act. The current law prohibits reprisals in New Brunswick, and there has been no punishment.

Similarly, when we look at the federal government legislation and when we look at the Canadian whistleblower legislation, it says it is not as strong as it could be and that what we have really seen from the federal level is the dismissal of the commissioner. The person who was responsible was dismissed, basically while under investigation of the Auditor General, given a golden handshake and went away.

In New Brunswick, police charged a senior bureaucrat with, basically, the department of aquaculture and fisheries, with obstruction of justice. There was an anonymous letter sent to a member of the Legislative Assembly in New Brunswick, an anonymous letter. There is no way to indicate that it actually came from a public servant, but it may have.

In the situation here, there would not be any protection because there would be no ability to send an anonymous letter with the way this format is set up in the legislation. It has to be written. Someone has to put their name attached. That protection may come out, depending on how it gets referred, whether it gets referred to the RNC, RCMP, whether it gets referred to the Labour Relations Agency or a court case. Then the person's identify, the whistleblower, may not be at the level of protection.

Basically, in New Brunswick it talked about how civil servants are still uneasy about coming forward with information, about revealing things about colleagues they may have, because people may not feel 100 per cent comfortable that they are fully protected. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner says that they need to toughen the act to make sure that there are the adequate

punishments in place so that if there is an employee who would retaliate against a whistleblower – that type of action may happen where there could be harassment or where there could be some level of intimidation that was put forward.

When we look at the New Brunswick Liberals, the New Brunswick Liberal bills seek to protect whistleblowers and end nepotism. This is something that the Canadian Press published. They published that the New Brunswick Liberal Opposition says that it will introduce four bills in the Legislature. The Opposition is going to put four new bills in the Legislature aimed at increasing openness, transparency and accountability, and that would even have more protection against whistleblowers.

We are talking about something that was published February of 2014, just a few months ago that seven-year old act, the Official Opposition is looking at strengthening. They are looking at finding ways to make sure that they are protecting whistleblowers so that there are additional penalties put in place for those who seek to punish members to disclose or intimidate whistleblowers in government – that is what is quoted here – to strengthen that public interest disclosure act.

There are a number of other acts too that they are looking at doing when it comes to ending partisan government advertisements, nepotism from elected members to disclose immediate family members, and other things when it comes to the possession of government contracts. We know that if there is an inadequate process followed, that there can be significant impacts. So, that one bill is interlinked with a number of other bills when it comes to the integrity act, when it comes to what is happening in New Brunswick. The leader says that they certainly want to restore the faith of New Brunswickers in their government.

When we look at Newfoundland and Labrador, we really see a gap when it comes to openness and accountability and transparency from government. That is where, when we talk about the process of this bill and that it is going to go through the Office of the Citizens' Representative, I took some time to look at the annual report of the Ombudsman of New

Brunswick because in it they do a report. So, I wanted to see the detail of maybe what we would be seeing, since it is copycat legislation.

In their annual report of 2011-2012, it talks about how their Public Interest Disclosure Act, which is the copycat legislation of this whistleblower act, was assented on December 20, 2007 and did not come into effect until six months later, on July 1. Interestingly enough, our legislation will come into effect on July 1 as well. Copycat legislation, right?

The purpose of the act was very similar. It talked about the wrongdoings. I will not go through those word for word but when it comes to the actual act itself, it said that somebody may file a complaint for reprisal and that has to go with the Labour and Employment Board. Similar to how if it is a personnel issue, there would be a process in place, as stated in the act, whether it will be internal through the union process for a grievance or looking at the Labour Relations Act.

The Office of the Ombudsman is unaware of any activity under the reprisal section of the act. They will not know about any of the internal processes that are taking place because they are the only option, and it is the external option. If somebody does not actually go that route, then they will not get that information.

Then, in 2011-2012, we want to look at the statistics and compare the success of this piece of legislation. From when we assume the mandate – this is what is stated here in the report of June 2011 when it went to basically what is considered our Office of the Citizens' Representative to March 2012; the office received five contacts total under the act. Four of those contacts were actually inquiries. They were inquiries that did not amount any further, somebody just seeking some advice, some clarification, and the other piece of advice was just withdrawn. It was withdrawn because the individual opted to go through an internal process. They felt that they could deal with it informally, through their employer.

This piece of legislation that we have does not grant any protection for any employee of the civil service to be able to go internally to try to settle a dispute informally. That may be the

advice that would be given by the Office of the Citizens' Representative to make sure that the wheels of government are moving more quickly, that disputes can be settled in a more much efficient and timely manner, and the protection is given.

Why wouldn't we want to protect our public sector employees, give them the ultimate protection? The recommendation that was put forward of this hon. member in the report is stated that the New Brunswick act should be amended to include a sanction; sanctions against individuals who are guilty of taking a reprisal against a former employee. So if we look at that the New Brunswick act itself, it did not completely have all of the teeth needed, but it does point out in 2011-2012 that other jurisdictions do have whistleblower legislation. I find it very interesting that it states Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland – it leaves off Labrador – but Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario.

We have seen where the Office of the Citizens' Representative has investigated whistleblower legislation without having this piece of legislation passed, and that New Brunswick is actually acknowledging that Newfoundland has whistleblower legislation and that the Office of the Citizens' Representative has had authority based on this annual report that is stated here. It may be an error based on the Ombudsman there, but there may need to be some point of clarification where the minister who introduced the bill could actually clarify what is meant by this piece of copycat legislation and also the fact that the Office of the Citizens' Representative has investigated whistleblower legislation in 2009 and that Newfoundland and Labrador is stated there. Were they acting outside of their authority to do so without this standalone piece of legislation?

We need to look at that and also looking at the number of contacts that were there. The piece of legislation that is put forward in New Brunswick does not have a lot of contacts. If anything is an indication, we will likely not see many contacts as well.

I have a lot more actually to say on this. I see my time is expired. I will have the opportunity again in Committee to speak.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good evening. I appreciate the points raised by the member opposite and I will do my best during this Committee stage to answer as many questions as I can specific to the legislation.

The suggestion is that we have simply copied and pasted this legislation from other jurisdictions. It is not uncommon for any province to review legislation in other jurisdictions and look at how their legislation works in practice, then to adopt or modify provisions, where appropriate. In fact, Part VI of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act was informed by Manitoba's legislation. That was one of the only acts that was in place at the time. The Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act, however, has the benefit of being informed by the legislation based on the experience in six other provinces. We are also aware that the Yukon is currently in the process of developing whistleblower legislation.

Also, Mr. Chair, harmonization is a key principle of regulatory reform in this country. It is a best practice when it makes sense to do so. A prime example of harmonization efforts is that all Canadian provinces and territories, and the federal government, appoint delegates to the Uniform Law Conference of Canada, or ULCC. This is an organization whose sole mandate is to facilitate and promote the harmonization of legislation throughout the country. Many ULCC uniform acts have been adopted into legislation by this jurisdiction, including apology, vital statistics, public inquiries, limited liability partnerships, and securities legislation. So these pieces of legislation mirror legislation in other jurisdictions in the country.

While Bill 1, the piece of legislation we are debating here this evening, is consistent with legislation in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and indeed New Brunswick, there are differences. These differences are significant. They are based on the experiences that other jurisdictions have had

and suggestions that have been made to us by some of these other jurisdictions as we have developed this bill. I do not know if I will get through all of them now, but I will certainly talk about some of the specific differences that exist.

One that was highlighted during debate is the single versus the dual-disclosure route. This legislation contemplates a single-disclosure route, whereby disclosures of wrongdoing will be received and investigated by the Office of the Citizens' Representative, and that office will bring those matters to the attention of government. This single route will be unique across the country. It is considered to be the most effective process that will give our public service employees the comfort and assurance so that they may make a disclosure in confidence to one independent office which is equipped with the skills and the expertise and the resources necessary to conduct investigations in a fair and impartial manner.

The process of advice giving, disclosure, investigation, and recommendations will be consistent, because the Office of the Citizens' Representative will be the only office involved. All employees of the public service will therefore receive high-quality, consistent, well-informed, and knowledgeable advice and support. We have looked closely at what has been happening in New Brunswick, but also other jurisdictions as well right across the country, and we have been advised that internal processes have been problematic in other jurisdictions due to the need to consistently and continuously train officials in all departments and public bodies, and to ensure that all employees are aware of who the investigator is and what the process is and so on.

Updating the policies and procedures and communication to all officials and staff is very resource intensive from an administrative perspective. This can result in matters falling through the cracks for instance or investigations of serious and significant wrongdoing not being dealt with appropriately. That is a major concern for us. We believe the Office of the Citizens' Representative is well equipped to handle these matters in a consistent way, in a fair way, and in an appropriate way.

The Citizens' Representative has legislative powers that will also contribute to thorough unbiased investigations including the powers to hold hearings and make inquiries deemed appropriate for a matter, and the authority to require a person to provide and produce evidence. These authorities are pretty critical to ensuring a proper investigation of serious and significant wrongdoing. We do want to ensure that these matters are properly investigated. If matters were to simply be investigated internally, departmental officials would not have these powers, meaning that investigations could be severely negatively impacted.

The Citizens' Representative will also be aware of all disclosures of serious and significant wrongdoing reported and investigated. Whereas if all public bodies and departments were involved, there would be no collective sense of the issues and no ability to prioritize and expedite matters so that investigations receive priority and can be conducted in an expedient manner.

There were a few other issues we have learned about through the Manitoba Auditor General's review of the province's Framework for an Ethical Environment. There was a need for more communication to employees about the act, and more training for management in conducting investigations. Those are definitely useful learnings that we can apply here in our jurisdiction in Newfoundland and Labrador. There was also concern about the tracking and reporting of disclosures.

Through the Office of the Citizens' Representative, we will implement comprehensive awareness and education opportunities for employees. Given that the Citizens' Representative will report on all inquiries and investigations through the House of Assembly, there is no concern about tracking and reporting of all the activities under this act, as may be experienced if all departments and public bodies involved in providing advice, receiving disclosures, and conducting investigations – if everybody was involved, then the reporting and the tracking would certainly be more problematic, there is no doubt about that.

The Citizens' Representative here in Newfoundland and Labrador has been consulted

and has advised that he believes this legislation represents the best model in the country. He is satisfied that he can begin implementation of this legislation within current resources and that he will monitor the impacts over time. He will request additional resources through the House of Assembly Management Commission if deemed necessary.

I know the Member for Bay of Islands raised that point earlier today during second reading. I would suspect the Management Commission would respond very favourably to a request from the Citizens' Representative if he deemed that he needed more resources because of this legislation. We do not believe that will be the case, but the door is certainly open to that. I have confidence the Management Commission would do the right thing in that circumstance given how important that is.

Mr. Chair, I could talk about some of the other differences in the legislation, and I am happy to do that, but I would rather hear what other questions and concerns members have specific to the legislation. We will work our way through them and I am sure I will have many more opportunities to speak this evening.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, I would like to speak by way of background a little bit on whistleblower legislation because it is almost as if the government discovered a wheel and they thought they invented it. The wheel has been around for a while; whistleblower legislation has been around for a while. In fact, the first whistleblower protection law in the United States was on July 30, 1778; 1778 was the first whistleblower protection law in the United States.

Government promised this when they were trying to get elected in 2007. They got elected on that promise and seven years later they are trudging along. I guess they are getting ready to produce another Blue Book, so they would like to go back at whistleblower protection legislation and act as if it is something new. You see, it is not new. It is very, very old.

In the bad old days before Ralph Nader, whistleblowers used to be referred to as informers and snitchers, and probably even rats for that matter. Ralph Nader coined the phrase in the early 1970s, whistleblower. The whistleblower term comes from, as if it is a referee blowing the whistle to indicate illegal or foul play.

The different types of whistleblowers – and this is really relevant because this piece of legislation is very, very limited. It is also very limiting, as limited in the types of occasions when it can be used and who can use it. This is designed to deal with internal whistleblowers, people who would report misconduct of a fellow employee or a superior within their company. One of the most interesting questions historically with respect to internal whistleblowers is why and under what circumstances people either act on the spot to stop illegal or otherwise unacceptable behaviour, or to report it.

Mr. Chair, this is something that government should want people to do. Government should want people to report inappropriate, illegal, unethical, fraudulent conduct. We should want people to report it because it is in the public interest that these types of activities be rooted out. In order to do so, we have available to us whistleblower legislation, and this whistleblower bill is extremely weak.

We could have considered and have not considered external whistleblowers who would report misconduct to outside persons or entities. The Citizens' Representative clearly is an arm of government and not an outside person or entity. I am not saying that he is not the appropriate person or an appropriate person, but government has completely bypassed the internal option of providing protection for someone who would file a complaint internally within the organization.

Some of the common reactions to people who are seen as whistleblowers is sometimes they are seen as selfless martyrs acting in the public interest and for organizational accountability, although other times they are viewed as traitors, defectors, someone who told on a friend. One of the more prominent whistleblowers – I know we have looked at the most recent ones in the last few years that disclosed a whole lot of

information, and that was the WikiLeaks, this type of a whistleblower. Well, years ago, Ryszard Kukliński believed that he would be able to prevent a war in Europe between the Warsaw Pact and NATO countries by handing in 40,265 pages of secret military documents of East Germany and the People's Republic of Poland to the CIA in West Germany.

The whistleblower legislation that we are looking at is very limiting; it is very focused. Mr. Chair, whistleblowers are persecuted, regardless of what law we think we can pass to protect them from people exacting retaliation on them or retribution. There is no doubt that anybody who files a complaint in the workplace can expect to suffer some form of retaliation; however, the legislation that we are proposing – and I have no doubt that all parties ultimately will support the legislation, hopefully legislation that has been amended adequately to be much more effective than it is, but that may well be a few days away yet.

The different nations have a whole range of whistleblower legislation. Government would be interested to know that the United Kingdom has a government which is the Department of Business, Innovation & Skills, which initiated a whistleblowing commission in October 2013 to explore whether there are any aspects of the law governing whistleblowers that may not be protecting whistleblowers or encouraging them to come forward about wrongdoing.

Government seems to be acting as if this is a wonderful thing they are doing for whistleblowers. In fact, it is not a wonderful thing for whistleblowers; it is a wonderful thing for the taxpayers, for the people who are the straight shooters in organizations, the people who do a good job, and the people who will report misconduct but they want to be protected if they do so.

Mr. Chair, the Netherlands have measures in place to mitigate the risks of whistleblowers. They have the Advice Centre for Whistleblowers; they offer advice to whistleblowers. The Parliament of the Netherlands recently passed a proposal to establish so-called House for Whistleblowers to protect them from the severe consequences that they might endure.

In the United States, even though whistleblower protection was first used in the 1770s, the actual first law was introduced and adopted by the government of the United States in 1863. In 1863, four years before Canada was formed, the United States enacted the United States False Claims Act and then revised it in 1986. This tried to combat fraud by suppliers of the United States government during the civil war. The act encourages whistleblowers by promising them a percentage of the money recovered or the damages won by government, and protects them from wrongful dismissal.

If we roll forward there are different types of protection provided in different types of industries. On Wall Street, securities whistleblowers are provided incentives and protection by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010. The SEC Office of the Whistleblower was formed as a part of the Dodd-Frank Act. They help to handle whistleblower tips and complaints, and provide guidance to the enforcement division. They will help the commission determine the size of awards for each whistleblower. Further, they assist whistleblowers by promoting the program and providing guidance and answering questions about the program. Mr. Chair, the United States also takes an interest in whistleblowers in respect of the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the US military, US law enforcement, and tax fraud.

Australia is also fully engaged in whistleblower protection. There are laws in a number of states. The former New South Wales Police Commissioner Tony Lauer summed up official government or police attitudes as “‘Nobody in Australia much likes whistleblowers, particularly in an organisation like the police or the government.’ Mr. Lauer’s comments are clearly at odds with public support for WikiLeaks.”

We need not think by passing this legislation that it would be that much easier for people to come forward; however, what the legislation seeks to do is to ensure that if people do file a complaint, if people do come forward, if they do the right thing, that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador would provide

protection so that person will not lose their job, will not be basically frozen at the workplace.

The legislation that is proposed is very mild; it is weak. Even though *The Telegram* has recently called it copycat legislation, it sort of seems like copycat legislation, but when you read line by line between the New Brunswick act and the proposed Newfoundland and Labrador bill, it is easy to see that what has been copied has been copied but it has been watered down. It is a weak piece of feel-good legislation that intends to do the right thing. Hopefully, over the next while, the Opposition can help the government focus in the right direction and strengthen this piece of much needed and I am sure would be very popular legislation.

I have no further comments at this point, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will just respond to the member's comments. It was a fascinating lesson on whistleblower principles, I guess. I am not quite sure where he was coming from, but he did make some comments about our legislation not being particularly strong.

I actually am confident based on paying attention to what is happening in other jurisdictions, based on incorporating the best of the legislation from across the country and then fine tuning it to ensure that it fits within the Newfoundland and Labrador context within our public service, I think we can come up with a piece of legislation that is, in fact, the strongest of anywhere in the country.

Employees are going to be able to disclose a series of significant wrongdoing without fear of reprisal. That is the fundamental essence of whistleblower legislation. We have an independent office in the Office of the Citizens' Representative that will have the power and authority to receive and investigate allegations of wrongdoing, and publicly report findings. As I said in my previous remarks the Office of the

Citizens' Representative has the powers and the authority to really do that role in an effective way.

The anti-reprisal protections will be in place for employees who disclose wrongdoing. The Labour Relations Board has significant power. It will be given the power to consider complaints and award remedies, including reinstatement, for reprisals against whistleblowers. So we are talking about a piece of legislation that gives considerable power to the Office of the Citizens' Representative, considerable power to the Labour Relations Board, and also provides considerable protection to our employees.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a pleasure for me to stand again in the House and have a few more words to say to the Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act, Bill 1.

Of course, I think one of the things we will all agree on here in the House, and it has been alluded to by a number of individuals, a number of individuals have stated outright, we have heard a number of comments on it, is the fact that people who stand by the courage of their convictions and speak up, and stand by their word. Those people who see wrongdoing that affects the public interest in some way, that expose misconduct, expose incompetence or corruption, that those people who stand by the courage of their convictions are not only recognized but also protected through our law.

There have been a number of high-profile cases that members of the House of Assembly are no doubt aware of or heard about through the media. I know my colleague, the Member for St. Barbe, has talked about some of the things that have happened across the country and in other jurisdictions, and rules and regulations they have in place.

One of the cases I am sure many members will recognize is the July, 2013 – that was just last year – the case of Sylvie Therrien who was suspended without pay for revealing that she, like a number of other Employment Insurance

investigators, was subject to a quota. You will remember this was in the news just last year. She was subject to a quota each year to find a savings of nearly half a million dollars, \$500,000 each year – she was an Employment Insurance investigator – by denying EI claims made by people, by EI applicants. Basically, having to find a quota each year of \$500,000, denying many people who were potentially eligible for Employment Insurance benefits.

Basically, she pointed out at that time that many of the people who were denied Employment Insurance benefits were actually entitled to them. They were denied Employment Insurance benefits that they had paid for. They had paid into the system. They were playing by the rules. They were entitled to Employment Insurance benefits, and they were denied them because these individuals, by virtue of their work, were required to come up with \$500,000 worth of saved claims on an annual basis.

This particular woman, Sylvie Therrien, felt she could not send people out in the street in order to do the Harper government's bidding. Unfortunately, she did not realize how perilously close to the street she actually was herself because the government fired her. She was fired by the federal government, which means that she, in fact, was not entitled to Employment Insurance benefits because she was fired. She was stripped of all of her benefits from her work, her security clearance, and was basically unemployable in the public service. In the end, she was unable to afford her rent. She was couch surfing and living with a friend. That is all as a result that she pointed out this wrongdoing by the Harper government.

There have been all sorts of previous cases. We have heard about cases where the undue influence of one interest or another, whether it is the pharmaceutical industry or some other company that is pressuring for approvals and aggressively lobbying people who have spoken out courageously, and under legislation such as this would be protected.

I think one of the other things I do not see here in the legislation is scenarios that we have talked about whereby people are sort of shuffled off to some part of the operation where they are rarely heard from or rarely acknowledged, people who

basically feel like they have been put into dead-end jobs or positions after coming forward with information as a whistleblower. That, too, is a punishment. There are many ways to silence people. We have seen that with many cases, the high profile cases that we have seen come forward.

One of the cases that is synonymous with whistleblower legislation and protection is the case of the RCMP pension fund scandal. Everybody will remember the RCMP pension fund scandal. It finally came to light through the efforts of five people who were employed by that organization. They all struggled on; they all courageously came forward in the face of attempted or apparent attempts by top people there to block investigators.

Denise Revine was a human resource director who first uncovered these suspicious transactions. She compiled a massive amount of information, a massive file of evidence. Her boss, her immediate supervisor, Chief Superintendent Fraser Macaulay tried to ensure that all of this was properly investigated. He was removed from his position, given what he believed to be a punitive secondment, a transfer to another job that he felt was being shuffled off to one of the four corners of the universe to be shut up effectively.

Then retired Staff Sergeant Ron Lewis was also fairly persistent in efforts to make somebody in authority pay attention, first within the RCMP, then through Treasury Board federally and the Office of the Auditor General, finally the Members of Parliament, and then as a last resort out to the media. Staff Sergeant Steve Walker took part in the Ottawa Police Service's criminal investigation of the RCMP five pension fund scandal into the entire affair. Staff Sergeant Mike Frizzell was removed from the investigation as the inquiries got closer and closer and closer to the most senior RCMP management.

In what we would probably regard in a situation where there was limited or no whistleblower protection at all, in an unprecedented turn of events, all five of these individuals were given the RCMP's most coveted national award, the Commissioner's Commendation for Outstanding Service. The House of Commons Committee

unanimously passed a motion that the five be publicly commended and that the commendation be tabled in Parliament. Prior to this, no Canadian whistleblower had ever, ever received any form of formal thanks. No thank you whatsoever or recognition from authorities for having the courage of their convictions to stand out, to point out an obvious egregious case of corruption. Well, more or less outright theft that was proven.

All of those people were – various tools in the workplace were used against them to try and discredit them, to try and discourage them, but they did not give up. I think this is yet another reasonably good case to point out why we need whistleblower protection, such as the ones that are being proposed through Bill 1.

As my colleague, the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, pointed out earlier today, we have some concerns about this legislation. We know this has been a reasonably good try and we know the twenty-one sections that were copy and pasted from the legislation in New Brunswick have also been in effect and useful for that Province for some time.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the member for his comments. He gave some examples of whistleblower cases that have existed in other jurisdictions, and they are good examples. They actually speak to the need for this legislation. They speak to the importance of the legislation. So I hope we can talk more specifically about our legislation as we work through the committee process this evening.

He referenced the possibility of employees who are aware of wrongdoing being shuffled off – to use his words – to another job in order to silence people; being shifted to another place, perhaps a dead-end position in a department or an agency. That would be serious reprisal. There is a need to deal with just that.

Under this legislation, if an employee feels there has been any form of reprisal of any type against him or her as a result of an action under this act, then that employee can make a complaint to the Labour Relations Board. The Labour Relations Board has some real power, not only to decide whether a reprisal action has occurred but the board can actually order a remedy or a solution.

For instance, if somebody had been demoted or shifted to another position, then the board can make a decision to award compensation or even reinstate somebody in their previous position. The board has some real clear authority in this legislation that would address the specific concerns the member opposite is talking about.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Where I left off previously on this bill, I was talking about the Public Interest Disclosure Act. I have had the opportunity to listen to my colleague for St. Barbe talk about whistleblower legislation in detail and the historical significance from the American perspective, and also my colleague from St. John's North talk about a significant example of why whistleblower legislation would be needed and how we need to have strong whistleblower legislation to make sure that the whistleblower is protected.

What I want to ask the minister, and it is a very specific question that is not addressed in the legislation, or not one that I saw. It is listed in the Annual Report of the Public Interest Disclosure Act in New Brunswick, where it says, "If the Ombudsman receives a complaint from an individual who is not an employee of the Public Service, under section 23 he may forward the claim to the chief executive of that portion of the public service in respect of which the claim is made."

What mechanism do we have to make sure that when an individual makes a claim that it goes through the appropriate mechanism to make sure it gets dealt with? Is that the role of the Citizens' Representative to do a referral out? Will the Citizens' Representative then do a

follow up to make sure there was adequate action taken, or is the protocols dealt with on an internal basis?

That is one of the questions that specifically shows how the New Brunswick legislation is a bit different. That is something the Member for St. Barbe talked about, is that the legislation does copy a number of sections but there are differences. We do not adequately see that difference in how we deal with the individuals who are not part of the public service and how their complaints get dealt with, and we certainly know they do not have the reprisal piece.

If we go to page 7 of the bill it talks about, section 11, where disclosure restrictions continue to apply. “Notwithstanding section 10, nothing in this Act authorizes the disclosure of...” and then it lists (a) and talks about “...the deliberations of the Executive Council or a committee of the Executive Council; or (b) information or documents that are protected by solicitor-client privilege.”

Solicitor-client privilege, although at the briefing we received it was talked about that this is not uncommon, but if we look at real life examples and what is actually happening when we look at the overarching federal legislation, the Canadian legislation when it comes to the challenges that sometimes our government lawyers face, the ethical conundrums they face and whether it would be – government lawyers, about releasing information, know they may have to release a document or they know there may be something unethical or illegal happening, but if you are going to use a clause like: protected by solicitor-client privilege, then it can lead to, I guess in many cases, where the public is not being protected, or adequately protected.

To give you an example here of an individual who was legal counsel for the Legislative Service branch in the federal Department of Justice, so a lawyer in the federal Department of Justice, served the Office of the Attorney General, the AG, with a statement of claim. They alleged that their own ministry, their own department had acted unlawfully by failing to properly review the constitutionality of the draft legislation. They did not do their due diligence. That is the claim. That is the claim by a lawyer

who went to the Office of the Auditor General to file a complaint.

Do you know what happened to that person? Even though the whistleblower legislation federally existed, the immediate superior, that person’s boss advised that employee by telephone they were terminated, suspended without pay for making that action, for taking action to try and protect the public good.

Also with follow up, that person was not allowed to go to their office, was not allowed to access any files. This was a real piece of reprisal. This was action taken against an individual. It raises many questions about the ethical beauty of a government lawyer and the tension about whistleblowing legislation that exists, the rules for professional conduct and how a lawyer who knows there is wrongdoing happening in the public service is unable to use the whistleblower legislation to protect the public good.

That person felt so compelled that they are taking legal action as an unlawful practice. This is going forward. It is going through the vetting process, the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada on grounds that the allocations were unlikely to lead to an investigation. We saw a request was made under the Public Servants Disclosure Act seeking a legal opinion, \$1,500 to assess the adequacy. Eventually, the claim (inaudible) and said to move things forward; basically, it was almost likely or almost certainly inconsistent with the Charter – even if it was a likelihood of 95 per cent or more – but the argument was made that it was consistent – even if it was less than a 5 per cent chance of success – then there is no duty to inform the House of Commons.

So this was what was pressed. It went back to say that solicitor-client privilege should protect this information even though it could do damage to the public good and that due diligence was not practiced under the constitutionality of legislation. The Attorney General in the Department of Justice first argued that it violated the solicitor-client privilege because it revealed information, policy documents. We all know the Cabinet deliberations, what leads to a policy document, and that information based on Bill 29 and going on down through that. So this is how

the federal government tried to deal with making sure that a whistleblower was really being reprimanded.

They were trying to do good and got suspended there without pay, were not able to get their information, and then the Attorney General said you violated the solicitor-client privilege, that it is a federal offence, and it called for all the action to be dismissed, but that was dropped. That motion was dropped for dismissal of claims for breach because it said, “in order to promote an expeditious resolution, the defendant wishes to proceed directly to the merits and no longer seeks to strike or stay this action.”

So, government, the Attorney General, did not move forward on this matter on that basis. They talked about privilege, they talked about the privilege of doctrine and where policies of how government lawyers do their work, they were not taking legal advice on a particular matter. It really showed, this actual case, the Schmidt case, it talked about the Attorney General’s whole department was being unwilling to release information.

This is something that I raised in the first hour of debate. I talked about: Will the Office of the Citizens’ Representative be able to use information, protect information? We see there have already been cases where there have been criminal investigations filed with the RNC, the RNC goes to the Citizens’ Representative and they are not able to get the information because the Citizens’ Representative is using their act to protect the information and hide it, basically leave it unavailable for the public good.

So, how are we ensuring that the whistleblower, the person who should be protected, does not end up being unemployed and getting all kinds of information placed against them and have to go through the filing court challenges, dragging that in – how many public servants would have to financial resources to take on such an onerous task, as happened in this federal case that is going forward right now?

The lawyer has stated that this was not inconsistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that there was only the slightest chance that if it was moved forward for a constitutional challenge, that this was not

implemented in good faith and that the Department of Justice requires that of the Department of Justice in being able to engage in good faith. This whistleblower basically did everything right and that the activity brought the issue successfully to light. It brought this issue to light and it was done in fairness on how it impacts Parliament.

I am not able to get through the full extent, but maybe the minister could respond so far. I will get another opportunity to finish this example and go forward in Committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte.

MR. VERGE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Chair of Committees has reported the Committee has

been directed to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee sit again?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: On tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted.
Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess nobody over there wanted to speak, so I will speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: I have acknowledged the Member for St. John's South, but I will take direction from the – I do not have an accurate list in front of me of those who have spoken. We are speaking now to the amendment.

AN HON. MEMBER: The sub-amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The amendment. The sub-amendment has been voted on and passed. We are now speaking to the amendment. I do not have a current list.

AN HON. MEMBER: He has not spoken.

MR. SPEAKER: The member has not spoken, fair enough then. I will continue to acknowledge him and now he can speak. He has his twenty minutes.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I actually have nineteen minutes and twenty-five seconds. I do not know if you want to reset the time.

MR. SPEAKER: I just wasted seventy-five seconds. I am sorry about that.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I will talk a little bit about the Access. Inclusion. Equality., which is the Provincial Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador. The reason I want to speak about this is because I have had several individuals, some from my district, some from other districts who have contacted me wanting to get into Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, wanting to get accessible housing.

It is something that is a concern. I know that through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, they have a long waiting list for people who have accessibility issues. There are not enough accessible Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units.

Mr. Speaker, we had a couple of situations. I know I asked questions here in the House of Assembly on one particular individual. She was living in my district and she had been on the list for over three years, almost four years, waiting for a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing unit.

She complained of injuries to her hands because the doorways were not wide enough. She complained of injuries to her legs and her feet because the bathtub was not accessible. She complained that when there were power outages, because she was on the third floor of an apartment building, she could not get down the stairs. In fact, during the blackout that we experienced earlier this year, Mr. Speaker, she had to call the fire department to get them to help her down the stairs. She complained that she burned her arm several times because the stove was not considered to be an accessible stove.

So, we look at these situations, Mr. Speaker, and we look at the number of people who are waiting for accessible housing units, we look at the fact that there are not enough accessible housing units in the Newfoundland and Labrador inventory. I have to wonder why, in this year's Budget, there was not additional funding put in

place to allow those who need accessible housing units greater access to accessible housing units.

As part of this strategy, Mr. Speaker, we looked at what people said during the consultations on inclusion, the report that government calls Access. Inclusion. Equality. People talked about accessibility. Houses and apartments built with Universal Design principles, accessible and visible for those who want to visit, such as neighbours and so on. Mr. Speaker, this strategy, through the consultation process, a strategy that has as its ultimate goal the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society must be solution-focused.

We will continue on, Mr. Speaker, because there are some important parts to this document that this government commissioned, yet I do not see the commitment being put into making housing units accessible. The proof to that, Mr. Speaker, was in this year's Budget. We look at: "The Provincial Government has made a commitment to inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of society. This commitment was strengthened in 2011 with the promise to implement a strategy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities." It says here from the Throne Speech, "My government believes a person's path to opportunity should not be barred because of a disability..."

I just want to remind people that with this consultation and with this document and the great promise of inclusion for those with disabilities, that we are not seeing the evidence of that.

"The 2012 Speech from the Throne further affirmed the Provincial Government's commitment to the inclusion of persons with disabilities by moving forward with a provincial strategy." They say, "It is important to make sure that as barriers are removed new ones are not created. This requires the collaboration and dedication of all departments and agencies across the Provincial Government..."

Mr. Speaker, we look at this, the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing was one of the members that sat on this committee. That is why members of the community who have accessibility issues are

wondering why there was not a greater commitment in this last year's Budget, a greater commitment in this year's Budget, to address the issues that those individuals face.

Benefits of Inclusion and Accessibility: In addition to increased accessibility, they want to enhance the quality of life for everyone. Mr. Speaker, we look at a Commitment to Action as part of this document that government produced and they talk about changing attitudes and removing myths about accessibility will result in positive outcomes for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, the strategy of this document, Accessibility for All in the Built Environment, and we are talking about housing. "Universal Design was consistently brought forward during the provincial consultations as a solution for making buildings and places where people live, work and play more accessible." We talk about, as part of this strategy, "The concept of visitable housing promotes a design that provides a barrier-free entrance, wider doorways and an accessible washroom..."

Goal 3.2 of that strategy, Mr. Speaker, clearly outlines, "To increase options for accessible housing within private and public sectors" – public, meaning Newfoundland and Labrador Housing – "and promote the concept of visitability throughout the province."

Mr. Speaker, we have to wonder why government has not put funding in place to ensure that they follow through on this commitment, a commitment that was put forward in 2011, acknowledged in the Throne Speech of 2012; yet we do not see, as part of that commitment, the funding to back it up. It is one thing to say that we are committed to doing something; it is another thing to put that into action, to put the funding there to ensure that the funding is in place to ensure that accessibility needs are met in this Province.

There is an accessibility issue, Mr. Speaker. Those individuals who need accessibility would not find the minister's comments very amusing here tonight. I will point them out if he continues because the individuals who have accessibility issues do not find this a very amusing topic. I am sure that the minister will

continue to find it amusing, but those individuals do not find it amusing.

We have had several other instances, Mr. Speaker, where individuals with accessibility issues have had injuries. One individual, which was in the media as well just last month – I will name it, because it was on the front page of the paper. That particular individual, her husband had to shovel over 200 feet of sidewalk from their unit in order to allow her wheelchair access to the unit, which is shameful. He had to shovel over 200 feet of sidewalk. Once inside the unit, Mr. Speaker, the doorways are not accessible, the washroom is not fully accessible, and the bedrooms are upstairs. So, how can you say that a unit with stairs is fully accessible?

In this particular case here, Housing refused to put a ramp to that unit. The reason why they would not put a ramp to the unit was because it is not an accessible unit. They lowered the counters in the unit, after years of protest by the individuals who live there, and they put in an accessible stove, but would not put a ramp to that unit. The individuals had to go out – in fact, there was a community group that had offered to put a ramp in place, a fixed structure.

Housing said no, we are not allowing a fixed structure ramp on that unit because it is not an accessible unit. Yet they are renting it to a person who needs an accessible unit and they have been waiting for years. They went out and purchased a portable ramp and put it to the door in order to allow her wheelchair or her motorized vehicle in and out of that unit, Mr. Speaker.

There is a need for accessible housing. It is not a funny issue. It is not something that members of this House should make jokes about. It is a very real issue. It is a real issue to that individual who faces that issue every day, who every time it snows her husband needs to shovel over 200 feet of sidewalk. To them, it is a real issue, and I do not think they are laughing.

It is a real issue to the lady who lives downtown who was also in the media, living on the third floor of an apartment building – not an accessible unit. Those individuals, and there are several others, are looking for accessible housing.

This document – a nice, colourful document, very impressive – when it was put out, everybody, I am sure, in this House had great hope that this document would see with it the commitment, not just the words but the commitment to ensure that this document brought to reality what the people were promised, but it did not.

In this year's Budget, I was disappointed to see that there wasn't additional funding to make sure that accessible housing units were made available for those who need it.

Mr. Speaker, an issue this year, we talked about the fact that – I know that government have promised now to look into it in this year's Budget, but I did not see the funding attached to that. There was a private member's resolution last year. There was time to put the funding in place. There was time to ensure that the funding was in place and the commitment was made, but in this year's Budget we saw a promise to look into it further and to address the issue.

That is the issue of those who are on Income Support. The fact that whether you live in Piccadilly, as pointed out by the former Auditor General who was hired by government to review the issue and to review issues within the department – pointed out that whether you are living in Piccadilly or you are living St. John's, it does not matter, you get the same rental allowance. The rental rates in Piccadilly are considerably less than the rental rates in St. John's; yet, the maximum rate for a family, whether they are renting a three or a four bedroom home – the maximum rental supplement for a family is \$520.

Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the City of St. John's can you rent a three or four bedroom house for \$520, but that is what the rental supplement is for those on Income Support. What is happening? They are taking money from their food allowance, or they are working on the side in order to survive. They are coming up with it in some way, but they are definitely not getting it from the rental allowance because \$520 does not pay \$1,100 in rent.

Mr. Speaker, we saw an increase in Income Support this year, and I commend government for that because it was a much needed increase.

It was not enough, but then again, I understand there are limitations and government can only deliver part of it this year and maybe part of it next year. It was 5 per cent. It was very welcomed by those who are on Income Support, but the \$520 plus the 5 per cent increase on their monthly benefit still does not make up \$1,100 or \$1,200, which is what they are paying in rent.

Mr. Speaker, we do need to fix and put in place what was voted on in this House in a private member's resolution to ensure that rental rates that are paid through Income Support are paid based on which area of the Province you live in and what the average rental rates are in that area. That is the reason this party brought it to the floor of the House of Assembly in a private member's resolution, and it got unanimous support. I was disappointed it was not in this year's Budget, Mr. Speaker, especially considering it was voted on in a private member's resolution in plenty of time to have seen it worked into this year's Budget and made a part of this year's Budget.

We know the 5 per cent increase in Income Support rates was very welcomed, but we still did not fix the rental problem. There is a rental problem in many parts of this Province. It is not just in St. John's. In Clarendville, in Gander, the rental rates are much higher than Income Support allows for. In Labrador West they are much higher. In Corner Brook, Goose Bay, all over the Province there are areas where the rental supplement simply does not pay the rent, and they have to come up with it somewhere.

If we look at what is happening in those families, Mr. Speaker, they are sending their children to school hungry. They are doing that because they do not have enough to pay their rent and put groceries in the fridge and keep the heat and lights on. So they have to make choices. Their children are going to school hungry, and that is a fact, because in this Province we are double the national average for food bank usage. In this Province we are double the national average for the numbers of people who utilize food banks, and that is a shameful statistic. That is a shameful statistic.

Mr. Speaker, we also see a greater number of soup kitchens open in the Province. I know for sure in the city there are more soup kitchens

now, and there are more people using those soup kitchens than ever before. The reason for that is because people simply cannot afford to pay the rent based on what they are receiving on Income Support.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at – and I spent some time, and I still help out in ways at the soup kitchen. Every Friday morning for years I would go down and help at the soup kitchen down in my district. When I first started down there you would get forty or fifty. On a busy day you would get sixty people a day in the soup kitchen on Friday morning for brunch. We saw the numbers increase and increase. Since we became a have Province the numbers have increased and increased and there are about 200 people every Friday morning now visiting that soup kitchen.

That was over the course of about six years. It grew from a busy day being sixty, up to about 200 on average every Friday morning. That is not a statistic we should be proud of here, and there is a reason. Now the economy is doing great in many areas of the Province, St. John's being one of them. The economy is doing great, but there is a growing division between the people who can afford to live and the people who cannot afford to live.

Some of the people who cannot afford to live, Mr. Speaker, are those on Income Support. That 5 per cent increase is not going to lower by much – it might lower it a little bit, but it certainly will not lower by much, if at all, the number of people who are going to the soup kitchens or the number of people going to food banks.

It is going to continue to be healthy here in St. John's, Mr. Speaker. As the economy continues to be healthy, you are going to continue to see that growing division between the people who can afford to live and the people who cannot afford to live. That is something that needs to be addressed.

I know government put in place the Poverty Reduction Strategy. In fact, I was one of the ministers who sat on that Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee when it was first formed. I will say it was not just when it was first formed. For years and years, Mr. Speaker, that strategy

was doing very well. It was the envy of poverty reduction strategies all across the country. Other provinces were coming to this Province asking what we were doing, but I think over the past couple of years, Mr. Speaker, that has become less and less effective because there are more and more people going to food banks, there are more and more people going to soup kitchens.

It is becoming less and less effective, Mr. Speaker. There is a reason there are more people going to food banks. The Poverty Reduction Strategy is not helping everybody. We can hold that out because it was great news for a number of years but it is no longer helping everybody. The proof of that is in the number of people who are reaching out and begging for help.

Mr. Speaker, I know I have just over a minute left to speak. There are a number of other issues I would like to speak on, and I will get other opportunities in the Budget debate to speak on those issues, but before I move off the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the availability of housing, or accessible housing, I also want to talk about the fact that in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing's inventory, especially in the St. John's area, we have a number of properties now that if they were owned by private landlords, Mr. Speaker, I am sure this city would go in and put work orders on them. I know where they are. People renting them contact us on a regular basis.

AN HON. MEMBER: New Pennywell Road.

MR. OSBORNE: New Pennywell Road being one of them. There are areas in the downtown area, areas in St. John's Centre I know where the housing units are in great need of repair.

Mr. Speaker, it is great we are providing Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units but when people can lean against the window and have the window fall out because it is in such need of repair, we need to do more. That is part of the infrastructure deficit, Mr. Speaker.

When that party took government there was a great deal of talk about the infrastructure deficit. I spoke about it myself. There is an infrastructure deficit. We look at the number of bridges that need to be repaired, pointed out by

the Auditor General, Mr. Speaker, the number of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am very pleased to be able to stand tonight and speak to the amendment to the Budget. It has been an interesting time since the Budget came down, and I find it very interesting to see what the government chose to send out to the people in the Province after the Budget was brought down. It was an interesting piece of information – giving information to people that is half the picture, half the story. It is very interesting that the card that government sent around to the general population to promote their Budget, the front of it, or one side of it had on it information on a card that we all got on the day the Budget came down. Then, on the other side, there is a whole graphic that we did not get when we got this card when the Budget came down – a very interesting graphic.

The graphic talks about economic changes in the ten years from 2003 to 2013; it seems to be put together in a way to try to dazzle people, Mr. Speaker. For example, one of the things that they have is a graphic of a construction truck and talking about capital investment having gone up 232.1 per cent in those ten years, and there is an asterisk and the asterisk shows government and private spending.

It does not say how much of it is government spending. It does not say what the private spending is. It does not say what this capital investment was all about. Not pointing out that, in actual fact, over those ten years the government had revenue for the first time that it was able to use on our infrastructure, which was

really in disrepair because this Province had so little money over the decades, over the years. This picture, capital investment gone up by 232.1 per cent, is dazzling the people with figures.

Then they talk about average employment reached 232,800, a record high. It does not talk about unemployment. It does not talk about where in rural and coastal Newfoundland we have quite a high unemployment rate. It does not talk about the communities where people do not have employment in their communities and workers have to leave the Province and commute to the other side of the country in order to find employment. There is nothing about that – dazzling people with numbers.

Then they talk about the increase in average weekly earnings, 48.6 per cent. Once again, the person who is on minimum wage earning \$10 an hour knows that an increase in average weekly earnings for them has not been 48.6 per cent. They know that. Yet, again, the numbers out there to dazzle people, to try to get them away from what the reality is in their life.

Also, they talk about the per capita increase in household disposable income up by 75.9 per cent. Well, that is because we do have a group of people in the Province who are earning an awful lot more than they used to earn, but we still have many people in the Province who cannot even dream about their income having gone up, their disposable income having gone up by that percent. It is a dream for a large number in the Province, but dazzle the people with numbers as if they do not know what the reality is.

Then, an increase in retail sales, 48.6 per cent; I am sure here in St. John's the increase in retail sales is way beyond that, which brings up the average because there are places in rural and coastal Newfoundland and Labrador where such is not the case, many places.

This is what really gets me about this Budget; they have a section in it called fair society in which they talk about – the theme is social justice. Social justice, Mr. Speaker, means a society where the goal is to make sure that nobody is left behind. Social justice means a society where programs are in place, where

resources are shared, where planning is done so that everybody benefits. The people in this Province, Mr. Speaker, who are not benefiting know that they are not benefiting.

The Budget, for example, talks about making things better for seniors; it talks about the increase in Income Support, which is a pittance; and it talks about the increase in the Seniors' Benefit, again, a pittance, Mr. Speaker. They talk about the maximum payment seniors will receive in October 2014 will be the highest ever at \$1,036 up from \$971 in 2013. It is up a whopping \$65 – a whopping \$65 – and that is what they do not say. They use the numbers in a way that makes people think, or tries to make people think, everything is fine, but people are living their lives.

The people on low income, whether they are people on Income Support or working for minimum wage, they know what their life is, they know what the cost of living is, and they know what it is when they cannot buy food for their family and they have to go to food banks.

This government continues to deny the reality that is there for people. They continue to deny the reality that the gap between those who have and those who have not is growing in this Province. Every study that has been done in recent years in this country is showing that the gap is growing, but because there are people at that top of that gap who are doing well – and there are people who are doing well – everything is okay. It does not matter that the gap is growing and the people at the other end are not moving.

The very fact that this government would not consider the recommendations of the minimum wage committee, Mr. Speaker, that they would not vote for the minimum wage resolution that I brought into this House as a private member, that we were the only party that voted to go ahead with the recommendations that were made by that committee – why bother to put the committees in place if you are not going to follow the recommendations which were absolutely logical recommendations? It is not costing them a cent. So, they are obviously not listening to the people who are working on minimum wage. They are listening to somebody else. It is not costing this government, it is not

costing us, and it is not costing the Province to put the minimum wage up.

We have people who are working for minimum wage and who are going to food banks. That is a reality. Yet we are not supposed to think about that reality. We are supposed to ignore that reality. The fact that we have seniors who cannot afford to live, seniors all over this Province, both in the cities and in the rural areas; seniors who cannot put the heat on and feed themselves at that same time; seniors who, because they are \$1 above a ceiling that has been put in with regard to a drug card, have to pay for their own drugs and, consequently, cannot afford to fully take care of themselves; seniors like the women I talked about already in this House who chews ice in order to take care of hunger pangs because they do not have enough food.

Once again, these are not things that I am making up. These are the things that have been told to me as I go around this Province. These are the things that are told to me by the volunteers in the communities who are trying to help other people in their communities, the volunteers from the food banks. The volunteers who are going to the hospitals and going into the places where seniors are in beds. They are medically discharged from the hospital; therefore there is no medical care for them. They are lying in beds and vegetating because there are no beds for them in long-term care and because we do not have a home care program that is part of our medical system.

People could be kept at home. They could even be kept at home at third stage of care if we had a good home care system. It can happen. You can be bedridden and be taken care of at home if you have a home care system. I know because my mother did it. My mother was bedridden, but because she could pay for her home care she could stay at home. It was proven that she could be bedridden and be at home and die at home. Why can't that be happening for everybody in this Province?

The bits and pieces that this government does – I am delighted that all-day Kindergarten is in the Budget. It is something we have always said should happen, but we see it as one of the pieces that is part of early childhood education and a full plan; a full plan that includes child care. A

full plan that includes universal, accessible child care.

This government keeps doing bits and pieces, and I am happy when the bits and pieces are things I have been looking for but I want them as part of a plan. Yes, I am delighted that finally the student loan issue has been resolved and we are going to have grants come in for the provincial side. That is wonderful. I am really glad about that.

That is the one place where this government seems to be listening. I guess it is because they see the post-secondary students as voters who have some power. That is the only thing I can figure out because it is the one place they have listened, has been with regard to keeping the tuition frozen and now with regard to bringing in the grant system which we are really happy for, which is something we have always called for.

Mr. Speaker, they do not put plans in place. This is the thing that is really frustrating, and people say it to me all over the Province.

Where is the housing plan? They absolutely seem to totally have blinders on with regard to the housing need in this Province. They do not believe that even seniors are couch surfing. They do not believe it, but they are. Young people are couch surfing. This is what is going on in this Province. It is going on all over, and it is not just in the city. It is not just in the City of St. John's. It is not just in the City of Corner Brook. It is going on everywhere in the Province, but they continue to wear blinders with regard to that fact, Mr. Speaker.

It really does drive me insane when I think about it. I wonder where their heads are. Surely they see the same things I see. Surely they see the same things we see. Surely they are hearing the same things from their constituents that we are hearing. Surely they are, but if they are they are managing to block out the reality.

We have to have a society where everybody is taken care of. We have to have a society where the planning includes everybody. We have to make sure programs are in place that benefits everybody. If there can be drug cards for seniors in other provinces, why can't we have drug cards for all seniors here? I do not

understand it. If we can have home care as part of the health care system in other provinces, why can't we have it here? This is what people are asking.

If they can have an early childhood education plan in other provinces where we have programs taking care of children from the time they are six months on, in terms of seeing it as early childhood development, why can't we have it here? I am sick and tired of hearing them say every time they do something: We are the best in the country in doing this. We have the best of this. We have the best pupil teacher ratio. We have the best employment rates. We have the best of everything.

We do not, and that is the thing. People know that we do not because people now travel all over this country. People have either lived in Manitoba, or lived in British Columbia, or lived in Ontario, or their children live there and they know the difference. They know what exists in other parts of the country. So they cannot fool people with pamphlets like this because people know the difference.

People are supposed to get really, really excited that we have maybe \$4.8 million more going into Income Support. It is a pittance for the individual families. It is slightly over \$100 a year, while we are putting billions into a project, into Muskrat Falls where they have not proven the economic reality of that project to us. We have asked over and over for the figures that show us that it is going to be economically viable and they have not been able to show us that. They have never done it.

They can put billions into that project without proving to the Province it is going to benefit us. They put billions into that project which already we know is over what was estimated. It is over cost and it is going to be much more over cost than they admit. They are putting billions into that and people are supposed to get excited because they have another \$4 million in the Budget for Income Support. It is not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

For them to be using the term social justice when it comes to the way in which they run this Province, there is something wrong. There is

something wrong when we have people who are lying in beds waiting to go somewhere else.

One of the volunteers – I saw many, but there was one in Central Newfoundland and she goes to one of the hospitals. She said: Ms Michael, they are dying in the beds because number one, there is nothing, they are just there. They have nothing in any way to give them a reason for living. They have been medically discharged. There is nothing to be done medically but they are also there in the beds drugged. She said: I see them dying. I come here weekly; I come back to the hospital: Where is so-and-so? Hoping so-and-so is gone to a long-term care facility but no, so-and-so died. This is the kind of stuff that is going on.

We look at the wait-list, for example, for long-term care; the wait-list is only one thing. The wait-list does not tell us how long people are in those beds in the hospital waiting, those who are in chronic care beds. Some of them are there, many are there for months, and there are cases – I have heard of people being there for over a year. That is the kind of thing that is going on.

We know the concern in the Province with regard to mental health care. They keep promising. They have been talking for years now, and every year they have a bit of money in the Budget. Every year a bit of money with regard to a new Waterford Hospital. When is that going to happen? How long are we going to have to wait for that to be in place? How long are we going to have to wait to have adequate community supports for people so that when they do come out of hospital there are community supports there for them?

What are they doing with regard to the penitentiary? We know they have announced there is going to be a new penitentiary, but are they going to do with the penitentiary what they do with hospitals? Is the planning going to be more than just the planning for the facility itself?

I remember in this House a few years ago, because it was two Premiers ago when I asked - and I did; I was very concerned, and I asked: What is the plan – this was about Labrador West – for the services that are going to be in the Labrador West hospital? The answer from the

Premier of the day: We will figure that out when the building is up. That is not how you do it.

The building has to accommodate services. The building has to accommodate people. What is going to happen with the new penitentiary that they say they are going to build? Are they now looking at the kinds of programs that need to be in place so that those who are there – we have many people in our penitentiary who have addictions to substance. They have substance abuse problems. What is going to be done? What are the programs that are going to be there? Is that being planned simultaneously with the building that is being put up? Probably not, because they do not know how to plan.

This has been our theme here in this House. Every time we ask for a plan, they say: Oh, here is a strategy. Yet, the strategy is one thing; a plan is something that is concrete. It has goals set to it. It has timelines set to it. They do not do that about anything, whether it is in the educational system, our health care system. It does not matter what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Even when it comes to our infrastructure, the roads and the bridges and all the work that has to be done infrastructurally in this Province. They do not have a long-term plan for that. Show us every year what is going to be done. How do you prioritize so that communities know what they can expect? But no, they do not do any of that.

Mr. Speaker, I am not happy with this Budget. I am happy with bits and pieces that are in the Budget. Am I happy with the approach this government takes? No, Mr. Speaker, I am not.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to respond a little bit to the Minister of Transportation. I spoke about a road tonight in Carbonear on High Road North. The road on High Road North, of course, the town boundaries are there and the minister said no, it does not belong to the Department of Transportation.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you about a couple of roads in Carbonear like that, and conveniently these roads get lost. They claim they cannot find them in their inventory. The thing of it is right now, Mr. Speaker, that road does indeed belong to the Department of Transportation. The boundary line is to the first house in that road. I can say that, Mr. Speaker. I think the town has already sent the information into the Department of Transportation and identifying where exactly the line is in that road.

The Town of Carbonear, out of courtesy, used to plow that road so that the Department of Transportation would not have to come in there and plow it. That was done out of courtesy. We can say whatever we want about it, but the minister needs to take it into consideration that this is indeed a Department of Transportation road. It is in a terrible, terrible state, Mr. Speaker. It is to the point now that the town actually had to go up there just this week past and put crushed stone over the top of what is left there for pavement so that people would not be cutting the tires and everything off their cars.

Mr. Speaker, it has to be dealt with. I do accept his explanation of the painting of the highways, and we do know we had workers injured last year as it pertains to that. Again, it is very important. I want to emphasize the danger that is around the TC Square area there. Those lights are vehicle activated. Of course, if you happen to pull your vehicle ahead of where the line is supposed to be the lights will not change. It will not pick up the vehicle. Anyway, I would just like to explain to the minister that indeed it is a Department of Transportation road. I am sure I will have a chat with the minister about it at a later period in time.

I want to go back now, Mr. Speaker. I would like to go back to a comment that was made here earlier tonight, and in all due respect to government, about the \$800 million. I have no doubt in my mind, Mr. Speaker, over the last six years that there was \$800 million put in the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace. I am not going to argue it. I am not going to argue it whatsoever but I will say, because \$800 million was put in the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace, does that mean we are going to leave all the rest of what I have here on paper behind? Because that is not correct.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go back to Harvey Street in Harbour Grace. Again, a Department of Transportation road that was supposed to be done two years ago. It is not done up to this point in time. The people in Harbour Grace are very concerned about that, as well as other things in Harbour Grace, such as their stadium. That stadium is near, dear, and important to the people in Harbour Grace. I am going to stand here every time and speak about it. I am going to bring forward petitions, whatever I need to do, Mr. Speaker, to keep it on the lips of government, because it is just not correct.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SLADE: I am being brushed off here, and I know I am being brushed off, Mr. Speaker, but I am going to stand here and speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the Riverhead situation. Government did that road a few years back. They elevated the road away from the ditch. I have to be honest with you and say I was Mayor of Carbonear for eight years and a councillor for twenty years, and never did I ever see work done where the ditch is on one side of the road and the road is elevated opposite. It just does not make sense.

Those residents, Mr. Speaker, those six or seven residents there – the member opposite might not think it is a serious situation, but I can assure him for those six or seven residents there who are getting flooded out every time you even have a drop of rain, and especially in the wintertime. They were flooding out down there several times this winter when the Town of Harbour Grace had to come to their aid. So, it is no laughing matter. I would like to certainly have them look at that. If it means a bit of curb and gutter needs to go in there, I would ask the Department of Transportation to look at that because those residents there in Riverhead deserve better.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to do this all over again because I know they probably never heard me the first time. In Freshwater, the beach road has to get fixed. It needs to get fixed. I am concerned about a fire taking place down there, Mr. Speaker, and those residents down there getting caught in it.

I would like to bring something else up, too, Mr. Speaker, which I did not realize until three weeks ago. There is a community well down there and it has high levels of arsenic in it. That well is still being used. I have some serious concerns about it. I always thought that one of the biggest things of government was to provide clean and safe drinking water for our residents. Mr. Speaker, I have some serious concerns. The level of arsenic in that water is pretty high. We need to deal with that.

We need to deal with the issue of the beach area down there because, Mr. Speaker, if a fire takes place these people could probably get caught in there, and everybody deserves a fire escape. Certainly we can do that for our people.

Mr. Speaker, I will go back for a minute there and congratulate the government on the funding that Spaniard's Bay did get this year. It is a great help to that community. That community is a growing community, as well as the Town of Victoria. Victoria needs some major work done to it also.

I have to back to Bristol's Hope. Bristol's Hope is the same thing, Mr. Speaker. It is a wooded area. There are a lot of homes down in Bristol's Hope and if a fire takes places there, I could not say what the end result would be. I am very concerned about it, concerned about the environment for those two ponds, both in Freshwater and in Bristol's Hope. There needs to be something done with it. It needs to be addressed. I cannot emphasize enough the dangers that are there. Certainly, I would not want to be sitting in this chair or in a government chair if anything takes places down there, when it was brought here and there was nothing done with it. It is just simply not good enough.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go to Bryants Cove again because, apparently, that did not hit home. I do not know if members opposite heard me the last time I spoke about it. What I said was in Bryants Cove – Point Road they call it – the bus will not run in over it any longer to pick up kids because they are doing too much damage to the bus. So, that is a serious concern. It is a concern that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard it said many, many times about our seniors, in the wintertime how they were going to the malls, and one thing and another, to keep warm. Our seniors must be spending a lot of time in the malls this winter, due to the blackouts. They had no choice; they had to go somewhere in the warmth.

What we do not understand here in this House is that most seniors do not have any secondary heat, and mothers of young families had not way to make a bottle for their children. We have to be doing so much better for our seniors in this Province. We really do need to be doing a lot more for our seniors.

In Carbonear, Mr. Speaker, there are several units out there that house somewhere in the vicinity of fifty or sixty seniors who are moving into the town. We just have to do so much better than what we are doing for our seniors. We certainly should not be leaving them out on what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to go back a little bit on the fishery. Again, there are lots of issues for the towns. Like I just said to government, yes, the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace received somewhere in the vicinity of \$800 million over the last six years, and the district certainly appreciates that. It is infrastructure for the hospital and it is infrastructure for the school. I will still never get my head around what took place with the numbers in the school; I do not understand it. Before they actually opened the school, there were four more new classrooms getting built on to the school. Somewhere along the way the numbers were definitely fooled up and I cannot explain that. Anyway, I guess building it on is better than portable classrooms, I suppose.

I just want government to know that it is very important, the issues that I bring here, I am not bringing them here for me; I am bringing them here for the constituents of the Carbonear – Harbour Grace district. We need to deal with the issues that are out there. That is all I am saying. I stand here every day and try to do whatever I can for my district. Like I said earlier tonight, as well as you guys over there try to do it for your districts. I do not understand why when I stand here I am being heckled and one thing and another; I am standing here

because I believe in representing the people in my district.

Mr. Speaker, there are concerns in all those communities. There are concerns in many of the towns. I just like to stand and speak a little bit right now about limited servicing. What that means is if the towns happen to go and build a road in the community or something, it is not cost shared by the town and the Province. Mr. Speaker, in order for our towns to grow, that Limits of Service agreement has to grow. The towns are trying to grow and survive and, of course, we as a Province like our communities to be healthy, vibrant and bring in business to our communities. We all do that. We like to do that. Mr. Speaker, these are some of the concerns that I have.

On a note on the fishery, we have to be very vigilant on our fishery. If the fishery right now – you have COSEWIC there trying to make the codfish now an extinct species or a species at risk. I did that sentinel survey from 1996 up until last year, and I can assure you that we have seen some great strides in the fishery and we saw some big numbers come in. We can talk about the shrimp and we can talk about the crab.

As I said here the other day, when I opened up those fish, when you see ten, twelve or fifteen female crab inside of them you say: Oh my, what is going on? The same thing is happening in the shrimp industry as what is happening in the crab industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. SLADE: The cod are back, so do we fish it to death before it gets a chance to come back in a big way? No, of course we do not. We should not do that; but we need to put it in check because if it does not come in check, you will have a collapse not only in the shrimp industry, but you will have it in the crab industry too. That is just a simple fact.

Mr. Speaker, I would threaten to say that the fishermen are the best scientists in the world. They are out there in all kinds of weather. They know when the water is dirty, they know when it is clean, they know what the temperature of the

water is, they know what the fish is like – they know. So, I would suggest to him that they are the best scientists in the world.

Mr. Speaker, somebody on the other side there tonight spoke about the science boat that the government has out there. I will tell you, it is a wonderful idea to have it. We need science to compare with science. My question on it would be: The science being collected, does that go to the federal government? Because we have to remember something: It is not the Province that decides on whether a fishery opens or closes; it is the federal government.

I think this government, along with other things that we are doing here – yes, the science part of it is a wonderful, wonderful thing, guys. I will tell you, it is absolutely fabulous that you have science. You have to have it, because nothing gets done without it. The federal government is not going to move on it until the numbers are right, and we have to convince them when the numbers are right or whatever the case may be.

So, Mr. Speaker, the science part of it – absolutely. There is a lot of science after going into the fishery, and we have to explore other fisheries. There are other species out there that harvesters could be catching, and we need to explore that and make it a part of the Province's position to do those things.

It is not very good when you hear of fishermen from down on the Northern Peninsula talk about turbot and how they are watching the foreigners, we will say, or the people from Quebec coming over on the other side, and they are fishing away. That is indeed a problem, too. So again, we just have to push forward as a Province and try to get this thing going.

I congratulate the government on the science boat and Dr. Rowe. It would be interesting to see some numbers, because I think he has been doing it now for some three years. It would be interesting to see some stats on that now to just see if it is improving, or maybe the Minister of Fisheries could actually tell us if it is improving, or it is going back the other way or whatever the case may be.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are lots of things we can do, and do together. I thought the shrimp piece,

where you had the all-party committee, was absolutely a wonderful idea. You went to the federal government as a group. I will tell you something, I really do believe that you spun some heads. I really do, because we went there as a group, we went there together, and we need to be doing a lot more of that kind of thing to bring our fishery forward.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I am going to sit down and I certainly thank you for allowing me to speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to have a few minutes again, at the midnight hour, to continue to speak to the Budget. Mr. Speaker, we could be here a long time and we would never touch on all the issues in our district that the people have elected us to speak to. I loved when my colleague for Carbonear – Harbour Grace referenced it as the people's House because, really, it is all about the people. When we speak, we are not speaking for ourselves with our own agenda; it is just about being a voice for the people.

He mentioned the Limits of Service Agreement with Municipal Affairs. That is my background in municipal politics – very, very rewarding work. It is not easy work, Mr. Speaker, when you are in small communities and you are volunteering and you have aging infrastructure, you have a shrinking tax base, and you have seniors on fixed income. It is hard to balance the budget, and I believe that we have a responsibility to put supports in place for those people who step up to the plate and offer themselves to be involved in the municipal governance part in their community.

One of the issues, certainly, when I was there in my community as the deputy mayor, and also when I sat representing all of the towns in Labrador on the provincial municipalities board, one the big issues was the Limits of Service Agreement. I met with the former minister – he will know – a couple of times on that issue. I know that the response was always if we open

that up, then we are broadening ourselves to a bigger area that we have to serve and support.

Mr. Speaker, everybody realizes that we do not have an issue in our rural communities where most of them are fighting for space to expand. We are only talking about a very small number of people. Right now, those communities, their growth are stunted. I am going to use Charlottetown, my home community, as an example, because I am very familiar with that community.

When the Limits of Service Agreement was put in place, we did not have a Trans-Labrador Highway that moved on into another area. We did not have the only shrimp processing facility in Labrador. So, the Limits of Service Agreement was put in place and since that time, we have had people come into our communities a number of times looking for land, wanting to move in – guess what? In a land so vast as Labrador, affectionately referred to by many as the Big Land, we do not have any land in our community – the community where I live – to provide people with an opportunity.

Right now, we have communities around us – and I know that it would be so much easier on the government if they did the relocation. I know that is what many would like to see happen. Wouldn't it be wonderful if communities that have a shrimp processing facility could say: Move into our community and from May to October every year you are guaranteed your work? Say good bye to the community employment enhancement programs. Mr. Speaker, nobody is willing to work with us on that and help us move forward, so that continues to be a problem.

I believe there were three communities, when I was representing all the communities in Labrador, that consistently came to me and said: We need help; we want to grow our communities. Mr. Speaker, every day we talk about communities that are dying, communities that are bleeding out, and when we have communities that have an opportunity to grow, I believe we have an obligation to do everything we can to put supports in place to help those communities to become more efficient and more self-sustainable. So the Limits of Service

Agreement is something that certainly we need to be revisiting.

If you are worried about setting a precedent and opening up a can of worms – to use the analogy of the former minister – we can avoid that. Maybe we can say communities that have a population of 500 people or less, or communities in the Province with a 1,000 people or less that need to expand because their growth is stunted and there is no land there for people who want to move in. We should be revisiting that, Mr. Speaker, absolutely.

Another issue – and I have been meaning to speak to it for some time and I have not had the opportunity – is Crown lands. People submit an application, and so many departments, there is a deadline on when you can expect a turnaround. We have big, huge issues with Crown lands, Mr. Speaker. We have people who cannot get their mortgages straightened out through the bank until they have the deed on their land, yet we have people waiting for up to two years when they submit an application. There have been so many cuts in that department, Mr. Speaker, and the people who are there, I believe that they are doing the best that can with what they have, but the resources are simply not there.

So again, we have another situation in my area – we are always very pleased when people get work on bigger projects and they commute and come back and they are willing to live in the region, but frustrating. We have outmigration – our outmigration, no one will argue, is much greater than the people who want to move back. Yet when the people do want to move back, the provisions are not there and the supports are not there put in place for them to do that. So obviously, Mr. Speaker, we still have some work to do. We have a long way to go from where we need to be.

My colleague was just referring to seniors. There are aging demographics in our Province, happening at record levels. I did see a PowerPoint presentation that covered the aging demographics in my district from L'Anse au Clair to Cartwright. It is absolutely frightening the trend that we see that is happening. Mr. Speaker, I do not see that we are getting ready in our rural communities. We should be looking at long-term care facilities in those communities.

We should be looking at places where seniors can stay in their home region, where families can come and visit and they can age with some form of dignity. Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure right now is not there. Now is the time when we need to be planning for that.

I think of communities like Cartwright. It is not a big community, maybe 400 or 500 people, yet over 200 people over the age of fifty in that community, Mr. Speaker. We are not sitting down and we are not talking with the people on the ground. We are not getting ready. We are going to end up in a big crisis, Mr. Speaker, if we do not do something about that.

Seniors in our region who have to travel very far for specialist appointments, my heart goes out to them. I met with the department a few months ago. I remember a gentleman said to me: I do not agree with you that there are disparities among seniors because they are all on the same income. I could not agree with him, Mr. Speaker, because when you live far away from a service – and no, everybody does not want to relocate to an urban area.

I believe what you save in the service you provide to the community you are going to pay for that in other avenues, like mental health, Mr. Speaker. These people are not going anywhere. So we need to sit down and we need to be figuring out how we can provide a more adequate service to these people.

This year has been extremely hard in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair on seniors. If they are trying to get to Corner Brook for an appointment, sometimes that has meant about a four-day cruise on the *Apollo* or on the *Bond*. It has been really, really frustrating and quite expensive.

Mr. Speaker, just last week when I was in St. Anthony a couple of ladies I ran into expressed a great deal of frustration to me because after waiting for weeks and weeks for an appointment, they got their voucher and travelled for their appointment, only to find out the specialist was not even at hospital. Mr. Speaker, I know that is down at an operational level and it falls under a health board, but I believe it comes back to better communication. Communication needs to be improved

everywhere. As we move toward more transparency, more accountability, we need to do a better job at communicating.

That is just one example, Mr. Speaker, of two people whose way was subsidized from Blanc Sablon to St. Anthony for appointments that did not happen. I am not sure how much that is happening, Mr. Speaker. I just happened to be there on a personal issue and I ran into these people.

No doubt, if we were to look a little closer under a magnifying glass – consistently we talk about the large demand and the budget is simply not there to meet it, but, Mr. Speaker, there are so many ways we can improve on what we are spending right now. Absolutely, I believe there are so many ways we can do that. Sometimes it seems like certain departments do a better job at more efficiently managing money and then some others it just seems like money is tossed out like candy, Mr. Speaker. It is very concerning.

Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure needs in the district are very, very huge. The small town councils that run those communities, the only way they can do that is with support through a 90-10 application. That is where they apply to get roadwork completed. That is where they apply to get water and sewer finished in the community.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, I have three communities that are looking for some assistance, some direction of an engineer, if we could work together and collaborate to get wells drilled in their community. We need to be working with those communities to help them do that. We are talking about drinking water, basic drinking water. Drilling wells, I believe that would be cheaper than a full water and sewer project, Mr. Speaker.

It was just late last week that the community of Black Tickle's water treatment plant was down. I give credit to the minister for coming forward with some money so that the people in that community – you give credit where credit is due. He saw the need so that the people in that community could get things back up and running and have safe drinking water.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, the amount of money they are looking for, when they cannot afford it themselves, is absolutely nominal compared to the cost that would be inherited if those people would get sick, which is what happened the last time back in 2007-2008 when their pleas for help fell on deaf ears. Many people in that community became sick and had to be sent out, Mr. Speaker. So I am happy that right now they have the funding to get their water treatment centre back up and running again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about diabetes. The cost to our health care system on a go-forward basis, I believe numbers are showing, is going to be absolutely staggering. It is going to be daunting. So, Mr. Speaker, we have to be out front and centre on those things. We need to be leading the way in terms of planning now. We need to be playing a role more in prevention as opposed to intervention. Type 1 diabetes, I believe we have the highest in Canada. Maybe we have the highest Type 1 in North America.

I was very, very pleased when coverage was brought in for insulin pumps. I believe it is up to the age of eighteen. Mr. Speaker, I would encourage this government to look at funding insulin pumps beyond the age of eighteen because until you live with it – you read about it, you hear about it, but until you live with it you do not understand the benefits. I know in my household, it meant that a little girl six years old went from five needles a day and very poor control, to an insulin pump where she now takes one needle every three days and her control has been so much better.

Right now, the cost of an insulin pump is \$6,000 or \$7,000. It seems a lot to fund, but compare that, Mr. Speaker, with what you are spending on patients in the hospital who are on dialysis. You think about smaller cottage hospitals, like St. Anthony, when they have to send nurses out and specially train them to have those diabetes supports in place with kidney dialysis. So, Mr. Speaker, certainly there is a lot of work left to be done in that area.

If we continue to ignore – we already know we are not meeting the need in health care. We see it every day. We hear it from people who are waiting a year for appointments, calling in December and getting your appointment for

October. The wait-list is far too long. Many times, Mr. Speaker, because they are waiting that long other problems are developing because of the lengthy wait-list. You only have to make a visit to a hospital and you will hear five or six very sad stories.

Eating disorders, Mr. Speaker; in meeting with a team at the Janeway they told me it is becoming a real epidemic. It is alarming. They just cannot believe that nobody is talking about this. I do a little bit of talking about it when I go around to schools. Teachers are saying we would love to be educated on this. We do not know the signs to watch for.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when a young person, very bright, smart, academically and athletically, when they end up in the hospital for an eating disorder, oftentimes, maybe most times, that means a long hospital stay. We are picking them up at an intervention when there could have been, and there should have been, some education on this up front. Why are we continuing to ignore it, Mr. Speaker?

Something like an eating disorder is only going to continue because of the society we are living in. You cannot run to Walmart right now and pick up anything – on the way out at the checkout every single magazine that is in that store, Mr. Speaker, is telling you how to lose ten pounds in five days or something. This is the pressure that is on our young people today. It is impacting a lot of young women, but it not just young women. It is becoming a growing problem with males.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we only have ten doctors who are working right across the country, specialists in the eating disorder field. This is very, very concerning. They are tired and they are overworked. So I would encourage the Minister of Health to have a serious look. Very little is being done. I know Vince Withers has done some fantastic work, but they are only able to do so much, and they need the supports to help them carry out this very, very important work.

Mr. Speaker, often when I get up – and I am kind of moving around from different topics, but it is all things that impact the district – often I talk about the small communities and the

supports that have been stripped from those small communities. Just a few years ago, we had our economic zone boards doing wonderful work in our rural communities, and the Employment Assistance Services offices. It was not a duplication of resources. In many cases they were the only resource in the community, Mr. Speaker. For no other reason maybe then to cut dollars and cents, those were cut.

Right now in our communities we are feeling the brunt of that, because we have no co-ordinated economic development. We have a handful of volunteers and they are stretched very thin, Mr. Speaker. You have one individual who might be on six or seven or eight committees, and people get burned out. It is not right that the running of your community is being left totally to volunteers. They are not able to do it all.

This was not a huge amount of money. This was a partnership between the feds and the Province, and the Province pulled out of that agreement, Mr. Speaker. The employment offices, it is very, very concerning what we have lost there. I have mentioned it many times. Just talking to my constituency assistant tonight – yes, she is working tonight, just like us here, running late in the House. She works many late nights.

With so many of the resources stripped from the small communities, there is quite a big burden that can fall on a member's office, Mr. Speaker. People who are coming in and they are desperately looking for work, how do you close your door at 5 o'clock and say, sorry, the office is closed, when we know that we are the only office for those individuals to come to right now and look for help? As a result of budget cuts, it was the small communities that were the hit the hardest. It was the communities that were struggling; it was the communities that needed the supports in place to survive.

Mr. Speaker, we need to get back and look at regional collaboration. If we have numbers, a population that is shrinking in communities –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: – and there is not enough money for every single town to have a fire truck,

we need to sit down and help communities work through a process and say if you come together and if you share services, it does not mean that you are going to die as a community, but here are models that we can show you where communities came together, shared services and they thrived, Mr. Speaker. I think when communities understand that it does not mean a loss to their own individual community identity; I believe that you will see towns more receptive to that.

We have moved past – I believe one time there was always this fear of why should that community have it when we want it. We have seen the reality around us in small communities. We have been hit very, very hard with cuts and I believe that you will see a different atmosphere. Those people need someone to come in and to help facilitate some of that process and provide the supports. Right now, it is definitely not there. Those communities are left struggling on their own. It is very, very sad, Mr. Speaker.

I do not have time left on the clock, but I would love to stand up and talk about home care and the valuable work that people do in home care, yet they are paid so little. In long-term care, very much the same kind of work, Mr. Speaker, but those people maybe get \$17 or \$18 an hour. In home care, we see them get about \$12 an hour. Many times when I am in the district, people say to me: Why is there such a big disparity?

I will get up and focus on that another time. I thank you very much for an opportunity again to speak to the Budget.

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 just want to stand here to have my few words on the Budget debate here in the House of Assembly. For the record, Mr. Speaker, here it is 12:19, past midnight, and here we are supposed to have the House of Assembly open so people can watch, so people can view what their parliamentarians are saying, what is being

said in the House and here we are at 12:20 a.m. So you have to ask the question: Why?

If you look at the minister and you look at the favouritism for tendering and releasing people of bonds and releasing people of tenders in Labrador, all the heat that government has been taking lately on that, if you look at the cost overruns of Muskrat Falls, I can see why they would not want everybody to see what is going on in this Legislature. I can see why they want to go past 12:00 o'clock; hopefully, people will be asleep and not understand what is going on here.

Then we have seen here how these people opposite – they can all raise their hands – how many of them put the knife in the former Premier Dunderdale's back. They do not want anyone to talk about that. The first women Premier, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: The first women Premier here and they touted the women Premier. Guess what? They knifed her in the back, Mr. Speaker. They do not want anyone to talk about that, Mr. Speaker.

What happens then? The minute they knife her in the back, the minute they get rid of her, what do they do? She fooled up on Bill 29, mea culpa, Province; we redeem on this now, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was not us; it was Premier Dunderdale. Now, all the sheep over there, what are they going to do? What are they going to do now, Mr. Speaker? They are going to go out and repeal and review Bill 29. I do not blame them for closing the House, making sure the House is not open in the daytime so people can all this, the people in the Province, Mr. Speaker. I do not blame them.

We look at Virginia Waters. We just won the former Premier's seat in Virginia Waters. They do not want to talk about that. They want to stay open until 12:30 or 1:00 in the night because they do not want anyone to hear us talking about all this. I say to the minister, you are the first one I ever saw getting run over by a paver, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. JOYCE: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, most people in politics, we say we got run over by a bus, but the minister is getting run over by a payload.

Mr. Speaker, here we are in this Legislature, we are supposed to be here, and every time any of us here says a word, we are critical. We should be standing up here and we should be at their feet. We should never say anything wrong. I heard the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace tonight talk about water problems, talk about school problems – he should not be. How come, Mr. Speaker? How come?

The Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs stood up and said the process for schools in Mount Pearl is wrong; they should change it. There was not a word over there – not a word. Even their own minister stood up and said the process is wrong. The process is absolutely wrong; it should change, Mr. Speaker. Guess what? Not a word. That is all right, he is allowed to criticize; he is only a minister. When we stand up for our districts – oh, we are bad people.

So if anybody wants to stand up here and go criticizing, look at your own minister. He feels the process that this government set up, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely wrong and that the decision should change. So it is not only us over here who are saying there are problems with this government. I thank the minister for standing up for the people, that is what we are doing over here, Mr. Speaker, and we intend to keep doing it.

I heard the Minister of Transportation and Works tonight talking about how we all get treated the same. I say to the minister – I will be fair to the minister. When I did call the minister to have a meeting, we did sit down and have a discussion; but then again, the minister committed to me to get back on what pavement is going to be done in Hughes Brook – very, very, very dangerous. What is going to be in the tender? Mr. Speaker, I wrote the minister since and I am still waiting. It is not me who is asking

as much as the people who drive it on a daily basis. This is a very serious issue. When I wrote the minister on that it is because people want to know, because if not we have to go on to government, explain why we need it all done. It is very, very dangerous.

You are accommodating; I will be the first to admit it. Then again, it is my role to ensure the safety concerns are brought forward to the minister, and I will write again tomorrow. I have a letter already drafted, Mr. Speaker. I will write again.

The minister committed to let me know how much of Hughes Brook – if it is all going to be done, perfect, Mr. Speaker. The minister said: Well, we are all treated the same. We are all treated the same over here, according to the Minister of Transportation and Works. That is why the tenders are called earlier, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just because a minister says it, it does not mean it is always true. This is why you have to question it. I heard the minister tonight, and everybody is the same to him.

I did a bit of research while I was listening to the minister speak. March 21, Baie Verte – Springdale, a tender announced; March 7, LabWest, tender; March 20, Heart's Content – another PC district; March 21, Trinity – Bay de Verde; March 24, Bay Bulls; March 28, Stephenville East, Port au Port; April 4, Placentia – St. Mary's; April 11, Gander; May 1, Conception Bay; May 2, New-Wes-Valley; May 9 – all PC districts, yet we are treated the same.

What bothers me with this, Mr. Speaker – I understand politics. I understand how it works. You cannot stand up in this Legislature and say we are all being treated the same when I can read off the list and there is not one Liberal district here. The problem with it, Mr. Speaker, as much as they say they put money in the roads – and I agree they put some, not as much as they always said, because of carryovers every year – is that we have safety concerns in our own district. We have major safety concerns.

Is this government telling me that the only people they are worried about with safety concerns are the districts they are calling, all PC districts? It is shameful, it is actually shameful.

Mr. Speaker, do not expect me, as a member of this Legislature, to sit down and take it all in and accept it all. I refuse to do it.

When I look Hughes Brook, which is extremely dangerous; when I look out towards York Harbour, Lark Harbour, extremely dangerous; as I look at some places even in Humber West, in the Lewin Parkway, extremely dangerous, and I have to sit here and listen to the minister say we are all treated the same. Everyone that I went to, not one Liberal district has any tenders called.

Mr. Speaker, I heard a rumor. I am going to put it on record and see how far I am off. I know out in Port au Port and Stephenville East there is already an announcement made for funding. I already know that. For the rest of the districts on the West Coast, including theirs, there is going to be \$6 million spent. That is the rumor I heard from Transportation and Works. It is not near enough, Mr. Speaker. We look at all the tenders being called in these districts, yet we are all treated the same.

All the safety concerns here in all the Liberal districts are shameful. It is actually shameful, Mr. Speaker, because we have safety concerns also. If we are going to have tenders called so the work can be done this fall, everybody in this Legislature should be treated the same because every resident here deserves the same respect no matter where you sit in this House.

If you are not going to get the money, you should at least say we are going to call the tenders and we will get the work done. If not, Mr. Speaker, what is going to happen, there is going to be a dangerous situation. We have to bring it up. I am bringing it up now, Mr. Speaker. I am bringing it up right now because when I hear it, I look at the facts. Facts say a different thing. It is in writing. Everything I have here is in writing because I took it right off the government's own Web site.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the hospital in Corner Brook. Transportation and Works is doing a hospital in Corner Brook. Guess what? They went out, I think it was January or February, and put out a request for proposals to do the hospital. Guess what? The functional design is not even completed yet. It is not even completed yet, Mr. Speaker, and here are the people out in Corner

Brook expecting there is someone starting the work.

Now, I will not get into the Premier, the Member for Humber East, the Premier of this Province, who stood up in 2011 – I was there at the public meeting when the Premier stood up. Of course, everybody believed him, but I knew there was something fishy when he stood up and said construction will start in 2012. We have the tractors up there now doing the work and the tractors were up there.

In 2012, I came in in Estimates and the Minister of Transportation, the Member for Harbour Main was the minister at the time. He is the only member in this government who was honest about the hospital. When I asked him in Estimates: Where is the design? He said Eddie, we are in the pre-design. We do not have the design done yet. I said but the minister announced the hospital. You speak to him, he said, it is not even done yet.

Then, Mr. Speaker, when I raised that up, I took Hansard, gave it to people in Corner Brook, gave it all around to people in Corner Brook, here is what the minister said. What did our Premier say? What did the Premier, the Member for Humber East say? He stood up at a Rotary meeting and said: I will not resign until there is steel in the ground.

Guess what? He is out there trying to give up his seat now. He is asking Frank Coleman to come in as quick as possible to take his seat. He is the same member, the Premier of this Province who said he will not resign until there is steel in the ground. Now, Mr. Speaker, with that alone: Are we supposed to believe everything we hear? Are we supposed to believe everything we hear from the members opposite? That is just three or four examples.

Mr. Speaker, we have to remember the right-sizing of the hospital. When the hospital budget was set, Premier Dunderdale went out and met with the town council and said: No, if it is \$600 million it is not on. Cut her down. Right-sizing they called it, and they started slashing, they started cutting.

Then we got into a PET scanner and the radiation, we got into that debate, Mr. Speaker.

For two years I stood in this House, I went on Open Line – and my colleagues also. There are colleagues here from out on the West Coast. The Member for Burgeo – La Poile, the Member for St. Barbe, the other member – we have four or five over here, Mr. Speaker, and we kept at it. We have four or five members and we kept at it –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: I think there were, what? How many times? We had three or four public meetings? Five or six meetings.

MR. CORNETT: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: I say to the Member for Port au Port, you did not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up. You can stand over there now. You can whimper next to him. He can stand over there now and he can whimper next to the Member for Stephenville East. He never spoke one word.

If you did not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up, do not get here at 2:00 o'clock in the morning, 1:30 in the morning and try to tell me what I was doing was wrong. You had the opportunity and you never. Mr. Speaker, you can tell him he never had the intestinal fortitude. In Newfoundland terms, he did not have the guts to stand up. He never had the guts. He can stand over there now and he can go off all he likes, Mr. Speaker, but he cannot stand up in front of a public crowd and say, I agree with the government.

Mr. Speaker, when we were going on with the radiation unit and the PET scanner, I was vilified. I did not know what I was talking about. I was fear-mongering, Mr. Speaker. I had no idea what I was talking about.

We know there was a poll done out in Central which showed that 70 per cent would not come to Western Newfoundland. Then after we put a freedom of information in to look for the poll, there was no such poll ever done. Yet, the action committee, who I have to give a lot of credit to, did a lot of work. The poll, Mr. Speaker, was never done.

After two or three public meetings, the Premier of the Province stood up, and do you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? We are not going to put one there; we are going to put two there now. What do you think of that? Now we are going to put a PET scanner in there.

Mr. Speaker, what we have to watch out for is this Premier said this before. We have to be a bit leery of what he says. Like I said to him, and I said it to him straight up, excuse me if I ask questions about what you say. Excuse me, because my history and knowledge with the Premier on this hospital, you do not take every word he says as gospel. You do not take it to the bank and try to cash it. This is why I have to keep the pressure on, to ensure that the radiation unit and the PET scanner are in the design of the hospital, Mr. Speaker.

I can guarantee you one thing; you will not see the Member for Port au Port or the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East stand up if they are going to cut the ultrasound units. They are not going to stand up. They are not going to stand up one bit, because they are cutting the ultrasound units.

Mr. Speaker, what the former Minister of Health said is that they are going to have a mobile unit to take it up. We are going to have a mobile unit. We are going to bring it to the patients. When she stood up and said that, and the Premier, the Member for Humber East said the same thing, I said there is something wrong again, just because they said it.

So I put a freedom of information in, Mr. Speaker, and guess what? Ninety per cent of all patients who receive ultrasound tests in Corner Brook are outpatients. They are not even in the hospital. Here we are going to take out three machines which satisfy over 90 per cent. We are going to put one mobile unit in that is going to take care of the 10 per cent. How foolish. When you speak to the radiologist in Corner Brook, even with the mobile unit –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I know they cannot handle it.

Even with the mobile unit, Mr. Speaker, it still has to go back and get one with a unit that is stable because it is a better quality. That is the next fight here now, Mr. Speaker.

To the Member for Port at Port, if you have the intestinal fortitude, join us. Stand up for your people, because this is bigger than any of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: I know, Mr. Speaker, it is hard for them to handle it. I know it is, but guess what? Any time you bring anything up to government that they may not, or a commitment, unless you are the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs – you are all right to criticize the government, you can criticize the government then. You are all right. Because he is a minister and he is going out and standing up for his people, but if any of us does it: oh, we are ungrateful; oh, we should not be saying any of this.

How about the money that was spent in Carbonear – Harbour Grace? How about that? How about the water he was talking about? We are not allowed to bring anything up. We are not allowed to bring anything up at all, Mr. Speaker. Guess what? They did not elect me. The people of Bay of Islands elected me, Mr. Speaker. Until they do not elect me, they are going to hear what I have to say. If the Member for Port au Port wants to stand up with me, he can. If not, stay quiet like you are now. Mr. Speaker, I am glad he is finally staying quiet.

Mr. Speaker, I will go on to the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs. I have to say to the minister, we had a great meeting with the York Harbour, Lark Harbour council concerning amalgamation. It was a great meeting, I have to say, and the issues were brought forward and discussed in a great way.

In the Bay of Islands there are some major infrastructure projects. Once again, I look at water quality in Irishtown; water and sewer in Frenchman's Cove. One end which was committed to but they did not come through with the funding. There are sewer problems up in the Summerside end; there is Cox's Cove; roadwork done in Mount Moriah. Once again, Mr. Speaker, we are all treated the same. I just

wanted to let them know, the Liberal members here, we are all treated the same.

On March 11 there was a major announcement of infrastructure, Paradise; March 31, Pouch Cove; March 31, Bay St. George South; April 11, Gander; May 2, Grand Bank; May 2, Bellevue. There are no Liberal districts, yet they want to get the tenders out for this Province early so work can get done – unless you are in a Liberal district.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to ask anybody out there who is up or wants to read Hansard. Is it coincidental that we have a government who is out there saying we want to get tenders out because we want to get work down? Mr. Speaker, you can look it up yourself on the government Web site, everyone happens to be from a PC district. So all the people who are in Liberal districts, we do not need any of that. That is just not true. We are just saying that so hopefully you will believe us.

Mr. Speaker, the proof is there. I challenge anybody to go on the government Web site. I know some members are looking over there and they are embarrassed. I know you did not know it, but I am telling you, look on the government Web site. Mr. Speaker, members over there are looking embarrassed and shaking their heads.

It is disgraceful the way they are treating people who live in Liberal districts. They have to have safe drinking water. They have to have safe roads; yet, you will not do it. It is absolutely shocking. It is just unfair.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I have thirty-two seconds. I want to talk about the long-term care facility. We know there are a lot of long-term care patients in acute care. Talk about planning, Mr. Speaker. When they built their long-term care facility in Corner Brook, guess what? Their great plan; they cut the long-term care facility by 100 beds. I had to fight to get another extra wing open in the long-term care facility. When you want to talk about planning, when you want to talk about the needs –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: By leave?

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

This concludes the debate on the amendment to the Budget motion. I am now calling for a vote on the amendment.

All those in favour of the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion defeated.

On motion, amendment defeated.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, 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.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday.

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