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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start today's proceedings, I want to welcome some special guests to the gallery. We have the Mayor of Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview, Ms Elizabeth Parsley, together with her daughter, Kim.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We are also very pleased to have joining us today Ms Connie Pike. Ms Pike is the Executive Director of the Coalition Against Violence, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the District of Kilbride; the Member for the District of Torngat Mountains; the Member for the District of Port de Grave; the Member for the District of Humber West; the Member for the District of Harbour Main; and the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale.

The hon. the Member for the District of Kilbride.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: On May 14, 2014 Hazelwood Elementary celebrated Literacy Day with over twenty guests attending to help kick off the annual event.

Among the guests who attended were Mr. Darrin Pike, Director of the English School District, Mayor Dennis O'Keefe, yours truly, and various other personalities from TV, radio, and other community leaders. These guests read to each class in the morning; then the day continued with emphasis on other forms of literacy as a Stop, Drop and Read was played. It was a

wonderful day celebrating good books and stressing the importance of reading.

I would also like to acknowledge some students of Hazelwood Elementary on their recent accomplishments. Brayden Chafe and Andy Knight took part in the Can Lan Classic Hockey Tournament in Toronto in May. Their teams represented Xtreme Hockey and were made up of children in Grades 2 and 3. Andy's team took home the gold medal in his division, while Brayden's team placed silver in their division.

Connor and Carter Belbin, students at Hazelwood, attended a bowling tournament in Winnipeg recently and both did quite well.

Jacob Shortall, a Grade 6 student, won three silver medals recently at an Atlantic Diving Championship in Halifax.

Please join me in commending Hazelwood Elementary.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Kayla Torarak who has just received her commercial pilot's licence.

Kayla was born in Hopedale on April 9, 1991. She attended school there and graduated from high school in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in 2009. In September of that year, she enrolled at the First Nations Technical Institute in Deseronto, Ontario where she studied Aviation Technologies and graduated in 2012 with a Multi-Engine Pilots Licence.

Immediately after graduation, Kayla was hired by Air Labrador and worked as a Flight Dispatcher where she gained valuable experience in the company's operation. Just three weeks ago, Kayla completed her first commercial flight to the Labrador Coast as a Commercial Pilot to become the first female fixed-wing pilot from Nunatsiavut to fly with Air Labrador.

Having grown up with her parents in Hopedale, I can understand the pride they and all her family feel for Kayla. All the people of Nunatsiavut appreciate the confidence Philip Earle of Air Labrador has for Kayla and her ability as a pilot.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in wishing Kayla Torarak safe travels and Godspeed as she navigates the beautiful skies of Northern Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave.

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize three young athletes from my district who last week received the Premier's Athletic Award for athletic achievement. Table tennis brothers Michael and Nick Hiscock and figure skater Jenna Efford were honoured at the ceremony.

The table tennis Hiscock brothers capped off a very impressive year. They represented our Province at the Atlantic Championship, bringing home five silver medals, and both captured gold at the 2014 Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games. They now have their sights set on making Team Newfoundland and Labrador for the 2015 Canada Winter Games next February.

Jenna, who is an up and coming figure skater, trains six days a week. She will be leaving the Province this summer to train at the Sports Study Program of Excellence in Chambly, Quebec, under renowned coach, Josée Picard. Jenna was on the podium in multiple competitions as well, winning sectionals and provincials in 2014, and a bronze at the Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games. She also has her sights set on Team Newfoundland and Labrador for the upcoming 2015 Canada Winter Games.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating these young athletes on their success and dedication to their sport.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House to pay tribute to a daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, and my partner for the past twenty-six years.

On her journey through life, Eileen Gibbons – Miss Gibbons, to all of her students – made a huge impact on the many lives that she touched, including the thousands of young minds she helped mould during her thirty-year teaching career at Templeton Collegiate and G.C. Rowe Junior High.

Her belief in students and her talent to bring out the best of all of them on a daily basis earned her a teaching reputation unparalleled. For Eileen, good was never good enough, and there was always a little bit more she could squeeze from her students.

As one former student described her, “She was a phenomenal teacher and mentor and admired by so many. She took on many roles in her years as a teacher and took so many under her wing as well. Seemed she could never do enough for her students – she was small but mighty.”

Her grasp of the written and spoken word was amazing. Just about now she would be correcting my grammar, correcting my spelling, correcting my voice, enunciation, and delivery.

I learned much from Eileen over the past twenty-six years, but little did I know the lessons she would teach me over the past six months. She confirmed to me she was the most selfless person I have ever known. The medical staff told me that she cared more for their well-being than she did her own health. She was deeply personal, with a strength, courage and fight like which I have never known. She was steadfast in her belief of family, and if she was your friend – you had a friend for life, with a bond that was secure and unbreakable.

Taken much too early, she will be remembered by her unwavering sense of humour, her beautiful smile and selflessness.

To my butterfly, I love you – always.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable individual, a true gentleman, Mr. Raymond Edward Parsley from Harbour Main who passed away on May 11, 2014.

Raymond had a very successful career as an inspector with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. At fifty-five he retired and took on the role of mayor for the Town of Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview. He served as mayor from 2008 up until his passing just a few short weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, his loyalty and devotion to the town he served was evident to all who witnessed it. He persevered through many, many personal challenges, never once wavering from his responsibilities to the people he served, the people of Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview. Raymond was a strong spokesperson for his town and a champion for community improvements, providing leadership, dedication, and sensitivity in all that he did. His loss was felt not only in his home community, but indeed the region, and I would say throughout the entire Province.

His commitment to community life was only surpassed by his commitment and love for his family. Raymond is survived by his wife Elizabeth, daughter Kimberly, son Tommy, and grandson Brandon.

I ask all members to join with me in honouring a true champion, an extraordinary Newfoundlander and Labradorian, Mayor Raymond Edward Parsley.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is no shortage of high school graduations in the District of Baie Verte – Springdale.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize all 2014 graduates from the six high schools. They are: Indian River High School of Springdale, Copper Ridge Academy of Baie Verte, Valmont Academy of King's Point, MSB Regional Academy of Middle Arm, Cape John Collegiate of LaScie, and St. Peter's Academy of Westport.

There were thirty-six graduating students from Indian River, twenty-six from Copper Ridge, fifteen from Valmont Academy and MSB Regional Academy, eighteen from Cape John Collegiate, and three from St. Peter's Academy.

From the tasty meals, to the beautifully decorated gymnasiums, it was evident that a lot of hard work, pride, and preparation went into each ceremony. Teachers, students, and parent volunteers are to be commended for such outstanding work to ensure that everyone would have a fantastic, enjoyable, memorable evening.

With the exception of Valmont Academy, my wife and I had the pleasure to attend all of the ceremonies in each school. I was very impressed with the high caliber of valedictorian speeches and the strong leadership displayed by the graduating students. Teachers have done an outstanding job in developing the gifting's of each graduate.

I invite all hon. members to join me in congratulating all the graduates in the six high schools.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statement by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize June 3 to 5 as Roadcheck 2014. Enforcement officers will be out in full force this week participating in a road check blitz for commercial vehicles.

Roadcheck 2014 is an initiative of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance and represents a major undertaking by vehicle safety enforcement personnel across Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, for the next three days, highway enforcement officers and weigh scale inspectors from the Motor Registration Division of Service NL will be conducting commercial vehicle road safety checks and inspections to spot-check vehicles and remind owners and operators of safe operating practices. Officers will be checking for mechanical deficiencies, driver records, cargo securement and compliance with other legislation. These roadside inspections are conducted in accordance with nationally developed inspection criteria for commercial vehicles.

Road safety is a primary mandate for my department and Roadcheck 2014 provides an excellent opportunity to raise awareness among commercial vehicle operators about safe driving practices and the need for full compliance with provincial and national laws.

Mr. Speaker, Service NL is responsible for monitoring commercial vehicles on our Province's roads and highways to ensure they are in compliance with legislation and regulations and are being operated by qualified and safe drivers. We also check that vehicles transporting cargo and passengers in this Province are mechanically fit and comply with federal and provincial legislation.

Newfoundland and Labrador's continued participation in Roadcheck demonstrates our ongoing commitment to enhancing road safety in the Province. While our dedicated enforcement officials continue to perform their duties every day, our annual participation in Roadcheck helps to raise awareness of the importance of safety in the commercial transportation sector, as well as to educate operators on safety requirements and precautions.

I encourage all hon. members to join me in spreading the message of the importance of road safety and correct practice in commercial transport for Roadcheck 2014.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we certainly are very supportive of Roadcheck 2014 and thank the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance for this great initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I think nobody can argue, anytime you have something like this initiative taking place in our Province I think it can only be a positive thing. We all want to ensure that our roads are kept safe, and one of the ways we can do it is to ensure the heavy vehicles and so on that are travelling our highways have been inspected, that they are not subject to mechanical failure and so on, that they are not overloaded and all the other issues that come with it.

We are very dependent upon truck traffic in our Province coming across to bring goods to our Province. We see an increase in that year over year and certainly that is why we support the need to ensure that the vehicles that are delivering those goods are in good repair and safe for the general public.

Mr. Speaker, I guess tied into this was an issue I raised yesterday in terms of all of the debris and the safety issues on the Outer Ring Road. One of the causes of that, of course, is the fact that maybe vehicles are not –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Every day, of course, we are presented with new road hazards. I would like to thank the minister – I guess in this particular case I would like to thank the staff out there, the highway safety workers who are out there practicing their work as they carry on with highway enforcement, but I have to ask the question. I do not know if anybody else in the House here has noticed it, Mr. Speaker, but it seems like there are an awful lot of vehicles pulled in on the side of the road with apparent front-end problems, because you are looking at pretty much tires hanging out of wheel wells half the time from some vehicles that are broken down. It appears that we are encountering more problems when it comes to people who are looking after their own vehicles – vehicle maintenance problems.

I have to ask the question on the part of government, on the part of the drivers who are out there practicing safe driving and safe vehicle maintenance: Are we headed down the road again, for example, where we are going to be asking about the need for the potential of more vehicle inspections happening every day –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to highlight our Youth Innovation Projects, an initiative that engages youth in creative activities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Newfoundland and Labrador's youth are vital to the Province's future prosperity and it is incumbent upon us to provide opportunities to encourage innovation and creativity and to build essential skills for our young people.

It was for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that this past March the provincial government invited

proposals for projects that support and promote youth innovation and contribute to valuable learning experiences of our Province's students, not-for-profit organizations, youth organizations, municipalities, and industry associations. These projects relate to science, technology and engineering, and identify opportunities in a number of knowledge-based industries as well as areas of interest such as robotics, digital media, and other emerging technologies. Many of these projects investigate new technologies and how they relate to traditional industries and future opportunities.

We received a significant number of Youth Innovation Project proposals, all of which reflect to the goal of creating awareness among youth of the tremendous opportunities that exist in our Province. I am very pleased to announce that our government has invested over \$400,000 in support of thirty-two projects under this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, this past Friday, I had the opportunity to visit Mill Crest Academy in Grand Falls-Windsor, one of the schools which will benefit from this initiative. Students at Mill Crest will be introduced to technologies that will enhance creative learning through the introduction of a new robotics program.

Since the initial call for proposals in 2009, the provincial government has invested over \$2 million in 136 projects that support youth innovation.

Mr. Speaker, the ability of our youth to find creative solutions, use leading-edge technologies, and produce adaptive solutions is so inspiring to our government and we are committed to supporting the youth who represent a bright future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Youth Innovation Projects is a great initiative by the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development.

Technology is one of the fastest growing sectors in our Province. The promotion of technology and engineering is wonderful. We need to encourage and build these essential skills in our young people, especially since after a few years of in-migration, we have once again returned to a Province where young people are leaving, post-graduation. Last year, we experienced a net loss of interprovincial migration, and the data for the first few months of this year reveals we are on target for another year of out-migration.

We need to have programs that encourage innovation and investigate new technologies and how they relate to the traditional industries. They are not only beneficial to our young people, but they benefit the Province as a whole. They are good investments.

I thank the minister for that statement. I would certainly like to see in future more investment in Western Newfoundland and Labrador as well as in Labrador, given that only two of the thirty-two proposals were from those regions of the Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement today. Congratulations to all the recipients of the government money in the thirty-two projects under this initiative this year.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we would like to see government do a little bit more is put a little bit more money, for example, through the funding of science fairs in high schools. We know that education is key to innovation. We also know that our education system is where it starts. Just to pass it on to government, a little bit more funding, for example, through schools

would probably spur more projects that government would be able to pour money into.

At the same time, we would also like to see government put more funding itself into the initiatives. We notice that government has put in \$2 million over 136 projects. This could be \$20 million, for example. We do not know where some of these young innovators are going to be going next and what they can be doing as regards the development of our economy in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Justice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize Environment Week, which runs until June 7.

Since 1972, people across the world have celebrated June 5 as Environment Day. Here in Canada, we have designated the entire first week of June as Environment Week and use it as a time to celebrate accomplishments in protecting the environment, as well as to promote and educate people about ways they can become involved and make a difference.

Globally, Environment Day was created by the United Nations to generate action on environmental issues and empower people to become more active in what is happening around them when it comes to the environment.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow I will be presenting this year's Environment Awards to well-deserving recipients for their outstanding environmental and conservation achievements. Their demonstrated commitment is evidence of the good work groups and individuals are doing to protect the environment in their own backyards, in schools, communities, and workplaces.

Our government is committed to working with individuals, groups, communities, and

businesses that are dedicated to the protection of our natural areas and the development of our resources in an environmentally appropriate and sustainable manner. We are making progress in reducing waste, increasing recycling, and taking action to protect and preserve our environment, and we will continue to raise awareness about sustaining our Province for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to do their part and participate in activities that promote Environment Week. A healthy and sustainable environment yields healthy people, a stronger economy, and more vibrant communities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for a copy of the statement prior to the announcement.

Government talks about protection of our natural resources, Mr. Speaker, but we are also seeing a government who have allowed 5,000 people to trample through a natural area within a provincial park. We see a government who refuses to take money from the federal government to protect the marine conservation area in Burgeo. They talk about reducing waste, but, Mr. Speaker, the last time there was major progress on reducing waste and creating curbside recycling and waste diversion programs was when I was Minister of Environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, they talk about conserving energy. The 2007 Energy Plan, Mr. Speaker, promised a plethora of initiatives and incentives to reduce energy consumption, but we see no signs of progress on that, none. None of those incentives or initiatives was put in place.

We see garbage along our highways and the Outer Ring Road and other areas of the Province, Mr. Speaker. We talk about

protecting the environment, Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap. Happy Environment Week, indeed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

In observance of Environment Week this week, on June 7 there will be a provincial day of action against Tordon 101 use in the Province, Mr. Speaker. Three very important groups in this Province, environmental groups, the Social Justice Co-op of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Coalition for the Alternatives to Pesticides, and the Friends of Grand River are holding a petition drive to gather names to stop the government use of Tordon 101 in this Province. Our environment does not just connect with garbage, this sort of thing that we all can connect with, but it also deals with what is happening in the future, in this case the banning of pesticides.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave that with government, hopefully they will notice that. Congratulations to these three groups here, and hopefully one of these groups will be a recipient of one of these awards this week.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well the first stage of the construction of the Hebron Project has been completed and the dry dock at Bull Arm, as we speak, is currently being flooded. The budget for this particular project was \$14 billion and the Province, through Nalcor, has a 4.9 equity stake in the project.

I ask the Premier: Can you provide an update on the total amount of money that the government has already spent on this project?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, obviously we would be delighted at the appropriate time to file in this House a list of all government expenditures. This project is another massive project, a capital investment in this Province. Capital investment, I think, last year was the highest it has ever been. It is going off the roof and it is driving employment.

We have employment numbers we have never had in our history. The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in forty years. I understand we are no longer the worst in the country. People are working and they are working with high weekly wages, and that is causing people to have more labour income, more household income, more disposable income. Because of that, we are seeing it in retail sales and we are seeing it in car sales, we are seeing it in housing starts.

The Leader of the Opposition is a businessman. He is in the retail business. I think he is in the car business. You are going to have a hard job going up against this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I am in business and usually when I am in business I understand what it takes when you have to make the equity investment.

What I asked was: How much have we spent on this project to date? That was a very simple question, and hopefully we will get the answer. I am going to go back there, because during the Estimates with the Minister of Finance I asked this very same question.

What I was looking for at that time was not only how much have we spent but how much have we

committed to this project. At that time, obviously I was expecting an answer. We did not get one then but hopefully today we can get an answer.

How much has been spent on this project, and how much have we committed of taxpayers' money to the project?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, this provides me with a great opportunity to convey to the members of the House, and through them to the people of the Province, what this government is doing as result of the Energy Plan.

We are not just sitting back and taxing oil companies. We are not just sitting back and collecting royalties. We have made a conscious decision that the people of this Province are going to invest in some of these oil fields and we are going to get a return from those oil fields.

The oil companies make massive wealth. It is time for the people of Newfoundland to make massive wealth as well. That money will come in. It will pay back our investment. It will pay back any loans we have taken out to make that investment, and it will provide a stream of revenue to the people of this Province. We can use it for health care. We can use it for long-term care. We can use it for education. We can use it for initiatives to fight family violence for years and years and years and generations to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With all due respect, and I understand the response, but what I do not get is this is a massive project that requires millions and millions of dollars from the taxpayers' of this Province.

All I am asking: How much money have you committed to this project? How much has already been spent on this project? If the Premier does not want to answer the question, I ask the Minister of Finance: Will you please answer it?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate standing up following the Premier, who so eloquently laid out to the people of the Province that this equity investment, we will get that return and more, Mr. Speaker, which is significant, because we are always talking about how we are going to move from non-renewable to renewable, how we are going to go beyond 2017. That is the vision of the government and how we are going to get there.

To date, Mr. Speaker, there has been \$188 million gone into the Hebron Project. There is another \$360 million as the project progresses, but it is expected, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the investments and the process with Nalcor, that they will be self-sufficient come 2015 and will not need government money to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In March, the Minister of IBRD said that the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor would be demolished this year; however, the Minister of Transportation and Works would only say that it will be considered for demolition.

I ask the Premier: Will the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor indeed be demolished this year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the commitment was made to put out an RFP this year to demolish the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor. That RFP is out now. As soon as the RFP closes, then we will sit down with the bidders, go through the normal process, and when we award the tender that process will start this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, based on the response, the demolition would be on the taxpayers' bill here, but we already know – and the minister has said there are a couple of companies looking at this – the former Abitibi mill sits empty, waiting to be demolished, as I said, while other mills in Eastern Canada have been sold as scrap to metal companies for millions of dollars.

I ask the Premier: Did you ever think about or did you try to sell the mill to a scrap metal company that would indeed create revenue for this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess in answer to that question, yes, we have. In the process of putting the RFP together, the Cabinet met on several occasions to discuss that very process.

Within the RFP what we have done is we have put an RFP together that will actually – the demolition and then the sale of whatever assets are there could be part of saving money for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what this government is all about, Mr. Speaker, is saving money and making things better for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is an ongoing issue with the canal seepage in the Town of Deer Lake. There has been assessment by engineers from the Department of Environment and recommendations that would help residents who are dealing with even mould problems in their homes right now.

I ask the minister: When will you be sending officials to the town to complete the assessment that has been requested?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I had heard of the issue a couple of weeks ago, but I became involved with it a little more intimately this morning when I had an e-mail from an area resident. Being someone who has had an issue with water problems over the years – I actually had to move out of a property one time – I can certainly sympathize with these people. It is something that I have asked staff to have a look at since I received that e-mail this morning.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we have already had an environmental scientist visit the site. I have asked officials as well to work with Kruger – with actually Deer Lake Power and have them also assess the canals that run from the lake down to the powerhouse.

I think these have been in place probably – somebody told me this morning they were built probably in the 1920s. Obviously, it is something that should be checked. I have asked our officials to write their light and power, like I said, and have that assessment done.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, despite an accommodation crisis in Lake Melville, the

minister responsible says he is not at liberty to say whether or not the Paddon Home will be used for affordable housing or long-term care. Meanwhile, Labrador-Grenfell Health is allowing the RCMP to use the building for training exercises.

I ask the minister: Why is the Paddon Home being used for training and not housing in a community with affordable housing and long-term care needs?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, it is only a week ago I addressed the same particular issue here in this House. I told the hon. member, in response to his question, that we were looking at all options for the people who were displaced in regard to Newman's in Goose Bay.

We keep in mind as well in regard to the housing issues in that particular part of our Province going forward, and we want the right solution for those particular people, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we are absolutely looking at the Paddon building, and if the RCMP can make use of it in the interim until we can make a decision, I am all for that as well. I am all for making use of infrastructure wherever it is in the Province. So, certainly, we will be looking at the Paddon Home as a possible solution to Newman's, but also in regard to going forward, addressing the issues in and around Goose Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, this is not just about Newman's; this is about hundreds of residents who are looking for homes in the boomtown.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister Responsible for Housing said an engineering evaluation has to be done on the Paddon Home before it can be considered suitable for housing. Its original purpose was to house seniors.

If the roof and sprinklers were upgraded, as promised, and the RCMP find it – and I quote – perfect for training, I ask the minister: Why are you stalling on using the Paddon Home, when Labrador has a housing and long-term care needs crisis?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for referring to Happy Valley-Goose Bay as being a boomtown, because it is absolutely a boomtown by the work that this government has done in stimulating the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We realize that there are issues up in that area. I have worked with the MHA from the area as well in regard to certain options. I will tell the hon. member that we are looking at various options, and also Grenfell Health is looking at options in regard to Paddon Home. We want the right options for the right application, and I will not tell the hon. member that I am delaying the issue. I just want that resolved, and I want it resolved in the right way, I say to the hon. member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier indicated in the House yesterday that there would be no reduction in ultrasound services at the new Corner Brook regional hospital.

I ask the Premier: Will commit to the people of the West Coast and Labrador that there will be six ultrasound machines at the new hospital in Corner Brook?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the functional program is being completed by experts at the Department of Health and at the Western Regional Health

Authority. They are finalizing that plan. No decisions have been made. That plan has not been brought to government for approval. I would imagine these experts will complete their work and then it will come forward to the minister, and then in due course the minister will bring it forward to government to make a decision.

What I said yesterday is that the hon. member's number was incorrect. I do not doubt that is a number he may have heard – there is rumour; there is speculation that goes around – but until such time as that proposal, the final plan, comes to the minister and gets his approval and then comes on to the government, it is then that we will know what is going in that hospital.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I was not wrong on the radiation units. I say to the Premier, you are the government; you can make sure that services are not reduced. It is not the consultants who are doing the work, Mr. Speaker; you are the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the new hospital in Corner Brook is still going through the final design stages and obviously, as with the radiation unit, it is open to change.

I ask the Premier: Will you commit to having public consultations with the residents of Corner Brook before any final decision is completed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear on this: We have to rely on experts who know something about hospitals and know what ought to be there. Obviously, there will be a public consultations and obviously the people of the area will get to have their input and their say and what they think should be there. In the end, we have to listen to the experts, too. We will listen to the citizens of the area. We will take it, government will give it every consideration, but the ultimate decision on what

is going in that hospital will have been made by this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, Bill 12 on the Order Paper deals with raising tobacco tax. As a result, government will take in \$165 million this year in tobacco tax alone; however, government only plans to reinvest \$700,000 into a smoking cessation program.

Given that smoking costs our health care system millions every year, I ask the minister: Why hasn't government committed more to decreasing smoking rates in our Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The smoking cessation program, which was announced in this year's Budget, has been well received by stakeholder groups throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a significant step forward to provide supports and assistance to eligible individuals throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, who are eligible under the guidelines of Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program to avail of this program. It is a significant program. The focus of this program is on creating an avenue and an opportunity for those who wish to participate to find better health.

Mr. Speaker, this is very much what this government is about, is working with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to find opportunities for them to improve their own health. We are assisting in doing that by this program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, we are one of only two provinces that are not providing coverage. I am glad to hear that it is there, after years of asking for it. We also have amongst the highest rates of smoking in Canada.

The Minister of Health in 2011 said that smoking costs our health care system about \$300 million to \$400 million every year, yet we are still not making any meaningful change and this program is just the start.

I ask: Why haven't you committed to an enhanced smoking cessation program that would see drastic reductions in smoking rates, help improve the health of our population, and decrease health care costs?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of different programs throughout the country, as the member opposite has referenced in his comments before the House this afternoon. We are taking an approach that we want to implement this new program. We want to make it available to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

As we have done in programs before this, as we roll this out it is very important that we monitor the program, we monitor it as it is delivered, and we evaluate the success of the program. Then we will be in a position to be able to modify and make improvements to the program so it can be the best possible result.

That is what we seek when we look at programs such as this, when we initiate programs regarding health care, better lifestyles, and healthier lifestyles for the people of the Province. Our goal is to do that. What we will do is we will be doing an evaluation as this goes on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, this season has proven beyond any reasonable doubt that any new vessel serving the Strait of Belle Isle will require significant ice breaking capacity and increased horsepower. The new RFP issued for ferry service fails to designate ice breaking capacity or increased horsepower from the existing vessel.

I ask the minister: Knowing the challenges with ice facing the present ferry service – June, yesterday, she was still not crossing because of ice – why did the RFP go forward without specifying A1 ice class and increased horsepower?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest she read the RFP again. In the RFP it states that the vessels will be icebreaker class, right in the RFP. I am not quite sure what the member across the way is talking about. It specifies that right in the RFP.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: It is not specific. I am saying it needs to be at least medium, it needs to be at least A1. We are here in June month and the ferry is not crossing.

Mr. Speaker, the operation of the ferry service on the Strait of Belle Isle has proven there are glaring omissions in the fifteen-year RFP. It could be twenty-five because there is room for two five-year renewals. There have already been four addendums to the RFP. Obviously it is not clear sailing on the other side either.

I ask the minister: Knowing that those same ice conditions will persist in the future, what assurance can you give the ferry users that the RFP will address the challenges being faced? There is nothing specific there, it is very vague.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way is comparing the ice conditions with the ships that are sailing today. If those ships, if we felt they were capable of the weather that is changing as it is, then we would not put out an RFP for new ships. That is what we have done.

We have a ferry replacement strategy in place. We are very aware of the conditions that are coming down through and the changing conditions. This is something we have been watching very closely. It is only in the past five years that we had year-round service on the Strait of Belle Isle and that was determined after the changes in the weather over the last decade. So I am not quite sure how she can dictate what the weather is going to be like for the next decade. It is something we watch very closely, and in the new RFP we have addressed all of that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the member to wait until the Speaker acknowledges her.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Because we do not know, I would say that is all the more reason for planning and to be prepared. We are going to end up with just a newer version of the *Apollo* with the way this stands, I say, Mr. Speaker, because a contractor will come forward with a minimum 8,000 horsepower and we will be locked in for a long time, still dealing with those problems. You have time to right the ship, minister.

I ask you: Would you be willing to go back and look at the RFP?

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I can say very clearly that government on this side of the House has a lot more confidence in our business people than what they have on that side with the comment she just made. I feel very assured with the RFP that is out there and with the conditions we have in that RFP, that when new vessels go on the water they will be ice class and they will serve the people on the Strait of Belle Isle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, last week government suffered another loss at the Newfoundland and Labrador Court of Appeal. This time the court ruled in favour of former residential school students who filed a class action against our government, the federal government, and certain schools based on abuses they suffered as school children. A full trial is scheduled for later this year.

I ask the minister: Has he been briefed by our lawyers as to the viability of this case, the likelihood we may lose, and the how much the Province may have to pay in damages and costs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, our Crown prosecutors and lawyers keep us advised and apprised of the various cases and results going through the court.

With respect to obvious impacts, or financial impacts and whatnot, that is to be worked out later. I have not had the opportunity to discuss the details as regards the hon. member's question.

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, most residential school claims are successfully proven in court and governments and other defendants are usually ordered to pay large damages plus legal costs. Sadly, the court process also re-victimizes many survivors. Now seven years after this case began, government has lost the limitation period argument at the Court of Appeal.

I ask the minister: Will he now commit to review this case to determine if it is appropriate to pursue good faith settlement discussions to avoid a long expensive and risky trial?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

With respect to the gentleman's question, I have to take it under advisement and discuss it with my officials. If there is anything I can give with regard to an appropriate answer in this House – given that the matter is in the courts – then I will certainly do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, this government had a big launch when it announced its open government initiative. Although there is a Web site that says open government initiative, little has changed. This government is just as closed as it ever was.

I ask the minister if there is an actual open government strategy; and, if so, will it be posted on this Web portal?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we are into reruns with the questions again.

I have made it quite clear to the member opposite that it is going to take several months of consulting with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to build our open government action plan. We announced that it will have four pillars. We have launched the consultation process. There will be extensive consultation with the public in the months ahead. We will, by the end of this year, have an open government action plan in place that will lead the country, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, information should be dynamic, and the Province has an inventory of communities with broadband Internet which the minister made a commitment to make available.

I ask the minister: Will this be posted on the open government initiative, and will he consult with other departments to ensure that there is proactive disclosure so that we do not deal with just static information?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, during Estimates the hon. member opposite did ask me if I would table those documents. In fact, it was just this morning that I met with officials to try to ensure that, that information was put together. As I explained during Estimates, that information is with the providers. The providers have given us the information and we are now in the process of getting it assembled so that it is in a reasonable document. When I have that work completed, as said, I will certainly table that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After consulting with unions and employers for four years, in 2012 government changed the Labour Relations Act to allow card-based certification in creating a new bargaining unit. Now, with Bill 22 it is repealing card-based certification and saying stakeholders requested it.

I ask the Premier: Since no union was consulted, who are the stakeholders that told government to get rid of card-based certification?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we went through a lengthy consultation process back in 2009 and leading into 2012 when we made the amendments that we brought forward. During that process, it became very clear where the union stood on card-based certification. It has been validated again in correspondence in recent months with my predecessor. We know exactly where the unions stand on card-based certification.

Mr. Speaker, the changes we are making today, the change we are making as we speak to Bill 22 later on, is about secret ballot voting. It is bringing democracy back into the certification process. It is about the workers of the Province and it is about the people of the Province. We know we are doing the right thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have constantly heard from government that it consults with the labour relations committee made up of government, unions, and employers and they make decisions together at the tripartite table. Unions had no idea that government was

backtracking on a decision made only two years ago. The tripartite table lost a leg apparently.

I ask the Premier: What happened to the third leg of the tripartite table, the unions that are supposed to be at the labour relations committee?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Office of Public Engagement is very much committed to working with business and labour in Newfoundland and Labrador, both on a provincial level and on a regional level as well. As minister, I have had numerous discussions with business and labour leaders.

We have met with representatives of the Business Coalition, and I have had a couple of meetings with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour. We are committed to developing new models of how business and labour will be engaged with government moving forward.

The Strategic Partnership has served us well. It is now time for a new model; it has been under review for some time. I look forward to working with business and labour to move that forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, when amendments, including card-based certification, were introduced in 2012, government called it a modernization of labour laws reflecting a balanced approach. There was a considerable

amount of input from labour organizations and employers.

Given the lack of consultation of all stakeholders at this time, I asking the Premier: Will they take back Bill 22 from this House?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, back in 2012 when we brought the amendments to the floor of the House, we thought we were coming in with fair and balanced legislation. Since then, we have heard concerns. We have heard concerns from employers and we have heard concerns from workers.

Mr. Speaker, we decided to review that legislation. When we did the review, we looked at the polls. We looked at the research behind what is happening in the labour movement, what is happening with card-based certification and with union certification. What we found is that workers overwhelmingly want that vote on the ballot, in a secret-ballot vote, and they also want to be informed throughout the process. So, all the research out there shows exactly that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's defence for not reinstating the Family Violence Intervention Court was that it only served St. John's, but that is the fault of his government. I will keep this simple. Five women were murdered by their partners last year. Domestic violence is a major issue across the whole Province. Addressing it is government's responsibility. The Family Violence Intervention Court is the best way to do this – I know this, and the Premier knows this.

I ask the Premier: Will he do the right thing and reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court that he started, and expand it to serve families at risk across the Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, violence against vulnerable people is one of the most serious issues we have in this country today. It is a very complex issue. When I first became the Justice Minister, I think eleven years ago, ten years ago, one of the first things I did was meet with members from the women's community, and I established a committee called the Attorney General's Committee on Violence Against Women.

I met with that committee and I said: Given the complexity, given that there is no one thing that you can do, let's come up with concrete measures, a concrete action plan, where we can provide tools to help deal with this issue. The first thing we did was the Family Violence Protection Act, and the committee came out with that. It was not a panacea, but it provided an important tool. The next thing we did was the Family Violence –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That committee only recently advised the Minister of Justice once again that they wanted to see the Family Violence Intervention Court reinstated and expanded. Mr. Speaker, I have letters here from individuals and women's groups all across the Province addressed to the Premier asking him to reinstate and expand the court.

On behalf of these groups, I plead – I ask the Premier once again: Will he listen to them?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If I can continue – after we did the Family Violence Protection Act, the next initiative was

to bring in the Family Violence Intervention Court. It was a pilot project and supposed to run to see how effective it would be, and then whether or not there was justification, based on the results, to bring it, to establish it right across the country. After that, we brought in our Family Violence Initiative, and this year we are going to bring in part two of the Family Violence Initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the court is just based in St. John's. That is fact. We were looking for another tool, a new mechanism, given the fact that the numbers were going down – they were not as robust as the number of people completing the program. We went with a new initiative this year, another tool to add to –

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, as promised and certainly our commitment to open government, I want to table the benefits agreement between the Province and the Kami Mine Limited Partnership.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I further give notice, under Standing Order 11, that I shall move that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 5, 2014.

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

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS autism spectrum disorder has been estimated to occur in as many as – this says one in eighty-eight, Mr. Speaker, but I believe the statistics have been updated recently; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that this is a whole lot to ask. We have been presenting this petition over and over and over again.

I had the good fortune to attend spring convocation at Memorial University last week with the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition and there we heard a number of speeches about the work of Dr. Joyce Churchill in the autism community and building an awareness of the needs of persons with autism in this Province. Dr. David Vardy and Ms Elaine Dobbin were also present. These are other people who have been standing behind this call for a comprehensive strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador.

In order to bring together all of the levers and all the pieces that we need to ensure that young people and older people who have autism spectrum disorder have their needs met, so that we can have early interventions, so that people can lead productive lives and can contribute to their communities. That is all people are asking, and this is a necessary first step.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to be on my feet in this House once again to present this petition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, there is no justifiable reason anymore for not reinstating this court. It cannot be based on budget. At Estimates I asked the Department of Justice, I asked the minister, was there an impact analysis done in terms of what is the cost to the justice system by not reinstating the Family Violence Intervention Court? I asked if there was an analysis done on what the cost to the court was, what the Family Violence Intervention Court actually saved the court. We know it did save the court because offenders had to plead guilty right away which meant we did

not have to have a court proceeding after court proceeding after court proceeding.

Mr. Speaker, one would ask in this time of prosperity for the St. John's branch of the Family Violence Intervention Court it was \$500,000. What is that compared to the cost of extreme suffering and the rollout costs of victims of family violence who need services and who need housing. In fact, this was a cost-savings measure.

I have letters here that have been addressed to the Premier; they came in yesterday and today. They are asking the Premier to do the right thing, to reinstate the court and to expand it. That would not cost a lot, Mr. Speaker, because the infrastructure for the courts are available all over the Province.

It is not building buildings. It is not hiring new people. It takes a little bit of political will, it takes a little bit of training, it takes a little bit of co-ordination, and I believe this government can do it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand again today, Mr. Speaker, on the hospital in Corner Brook.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have names here today from Mount Moriah, Kings Road, Marcelle Avenue, Elswick Road, Curling. Once again I have a bunch of petitions here to present on behalf of

the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador concerning the hospital.

I have asked questions today to the Premier about the ultrasound machines, Mr. Speaker, if they will be reduced. The Premier did not commit they would stay at the current level as we speak. The wait time is 147 days. If the machines are cut down to three, which is proposed, we are looking at almost a 300-day wait time.

The Premier stated today in the House there will be public consultations before final design. That is positive. That is very positive. I am going to inform the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador that the Premier committed today in the House that there will be public consultations before the design of the hospital is completed. That is a first great step for the people of Western Newfoundland. At least we will have a chance to ensure the services that were committed back in 2007 will be in the new hospital.

There are a number of other concerns for the hospital, and each concern as they come up, Mr. Speaker, I will address them on behalf of the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador. It is great to hear the Premier saying there will be two radiation units in the hospital. There will be a PET scanner in the hospital, Mr. Speaker, but we have not convinced Mr. Coleman yet of the PET scanner. So that is on our next list of things to do.

I just want to thank the House of Assembly for the opportunity to present a petition on behalf of these people, Mr. Speaker. Once again, this is something we are going to build for the next sixty, seventy years, so we have to do it right. The first step, having public consultations before design is done, I say to the Premier, that is a great first step and hopefully we will get it right so we do not have to make changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has the greatest percentage of the workforce earning the provincial minimum wage in Canada, with women, youth and those from rural areas making up a disproportionate number of these workers; and

WHEREAS there has been no increase in the minimum wage since 2010, which has had detrimental impacts on the purchasing power of the most vulnerable members of the provincial workforce; and

WHEREAS minimum wage earners do not earn enough money for the necessities of life, and even full-time minimum wage earners barely meet the low-income cut-off of \$19,496 for a single person; and

WHEREAS government ignored the recommendations of its own 2012 Minimum Wage Review Committee for an immediate increase to reflect the cost of living and annual adjustments in line with the Consumer Price Index, and instead legislated a twenty-cent increase in October 2014, and a twenty-five cent increase in October 2015, with no indexing; and

WHEREAS other provinces and territories have been raising their minimum wages, leaving Newfoundland and Labrador on the low end;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to implement the recommendations of the 2012 Minimum Wage Review Committee and legislate an immediate increase in the minimum wage to reflect the loss of purchasing power since 2010, and an annual adjustment beginning in 2015 to reflect the CPI.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I am very pleased today to stand on behalf of the petitioners, Mr. Speaker, to raise in this House once again the issue of the low minimum wage in this Province and the difficulty that people

have who are trying to live on minimum wage, taking into consideration that a lot of people who are earning minimum wage do not even work full-time; they are in part-time positions.

In this Province, Mr. Speaker, 20.4 per cent of minimum wage earners are women. So, women are heavily impacted by the low minimum wage. Youth from ages fifteen to twenty-four make up 31.1 per cent of minimum wage earners. So, together, these groups make up 51.5 per cent of minimum wage earners.

This is really tragic, Mr. Speaker; one, because youth are trying to get themselves established in life and are trying to make it on this minimum wage as they try to move forward. In the case of women, many of these women are single parents who are trying to take care of families. So, we have a pretty awful situation for these people.

There are more workers over the age of thirty-five making minimum wage in Newfoundland and Labrador than anywhere in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the citizens, serviced by Curtis Hospital located in St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Labrador, petition the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador-Grenfell Health to retain the midwives and allow them to continue to perform all of their duties at Curtis Hospital.

Our midwives offer services that cannot be duplicated and which cannot be replaced. The level of care they offer and the knowledge and training they have in the area of obstetrics is immense. It will be a great disservice to the people of the area if our midwives are no longer available to care for the people here. Privatizing midwifery or waiting five to seven years for regulation, as stated by government, is unacceptable. We have an operational model of midwifery here in St. Anthony that has been delivering outstanding care for over ninety years.

We urge the House of Assembly to implore the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador-Grenfell Health to preserve our midwifery services at Curtis Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly something that government has been failing the people of the Great Northern Peninsula, Southern Labrador, and even the Lower North Shore of Quebec that has been serviced by midwifery care for quite some time.

If we look at the level of care that has been offered through midwifery for families at the post and pre-natal care level, as well as delivery, if we look at the number of babies that have been delivered by midwives – I myself have been delivered by a midwife, and there has been over 3,000 people that joined a Facebook group in advocacy: A Midwife Helped Me Out. It is important to acknowledge the cost savings that will happen in health care by having a publicly-funded model of midwifery care versus having to call in a doctor or an obstetrician that would be taking in – when we look at the number of pregnancies and deliveries they are very low risk; they do not require that level of physician care.

So, this is something that government has the health care act, they acknowledge midwifery, but they have not done the regulation, and it is completely shameful and unacceptable to the people of the Great Northern Peninsula, Southern Labrador, and the Lower North Shore of Quebec that we do not have and will not see midwifery in a publicly-funded setting for five to seven years, as the former Minister of Health has said, and that the focus is on privatized midwifery care.

I am not opposed to the privatization service that would be offered in larger urban centres, but in very rural areas it is just not practical. We had a model that worked – Labrador-Grenfell Health, and under the Grenfell model it worked extremely well, and it should be something that government takes great pride in restoring. I implore and ask the Minister of Health and Community Services to make this a top priority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have been up many times petitioning for the resurfacing of Route 510 from L’Anse au Clair to Red Bay. Since I began the petitioning, we have once again seen the cold patch come out and many of the holes have been filled. It did lessen the emergency situation that was there. It was absolutely atrocious – I know, because I am driving on it every single weekend myself when I am back in the district. I was just amazed and thankful that nobody was killed on that road this spring, although we did have four accidents in a span of about a week-and-a-half. We were fortunate.

Mr. Speaker, pulling out the cold patch and every spring doing that on a stretch of highway

where the pavement is thirty-five years old – activity is ramping up very, very much in all of Labrador and much of the traffic is coming that way. There is a very heavy flow of traffic every single day on the road, heavy, heavy equipment and what was left of the pavement is just getting a tremendous beating.

It is wonderful that we have had the pavement announced from Red Bay to Goose Bay. Hopefully that is going to come in an expedient manner. I know another tender has closed today, Mr. Speaker. We will be anxious to have that awarded.

Here is a stretch, Mr. Speaker. We are coming into the tourism season. People are going to be coming and towing their motor homes and things. There are people travelling every single day on that stretch. We have our medical facilities situated in Forteau. People are driving from Red Bay and Pinware, and people from Southeast Labrador are driving up. It is a very, very dangerous piece of road right now. You are just throwing good money away after bad when you constantly have to redo and fill it in. It is a temporary fix.

When we talk about the millions and the billions in this Province, I would love to know where the priorities are. Yes, we have a lot of roadwork that is needed in the Province. I think if you look at priorities, pavement that is heading up to four decades old in a very, very busy area right now certainly needs to be revisited, Mr. Speaker. I will continue to be on my feet with this petition.

Thank you.

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

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

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

WHEREAS consumers and businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador pay some of the

highest automobile insurance rates in the country; and

WHEREAS part of the recent increases in automobile insurance is due to uninsured automobile coverage, which could increase by 329.3 per cent in 2014 for taxis and limousines insured by the Facility Association; and

WHEREAS consumers may see an increase in taxi fares and limousine rates as a result; and

WHEREAS consumers insured by the Facility Association could see their own auto insurance rates increase partly due to uninsured drivers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to establish a procedure for insurance companies to co-ordinate with police, highway enforcement officers, and the Motor Registration Division to remove unlicensed and uninsured vehicles from our Province's highways.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a number of times that I have risen and spoken in the House on this particular issue. I want to thank particularly the taxi industry out there for asking me to present this petition on their behalf. Today it is probably about the largest of the bunch so far, about fifteen pages of names and addresses here.

Mr. Speaker, the taxi industry is on the threat of paying probably the highest insurance cost in this Province. Let me just give you an example of the proposal that has gone through the Public Utilities Board right now. For taxis and limousines, effective August 1, 2014, if the next round of increases come into effect, the third-party liability insurance, for example, is going to be going up by 50 per cent, an extra \$1,400; accident benefits, 294.3 per cent, an extra \$235 on top of their insurance bills right now; an uninsured automobile right now by 329.3 per cent. It does not look like a big dollar amount but the huge increase of 329 per cent puts it in perspective of what we are dealing with out there in the market, and what we are dealing with out there every day on the roads.

Mr. Speaker, all I can say to this is that if government does not want to address this, then there is one other option and that is going to be a public insurance type system in this Province that I am pretty sure that government, and a bunch of their supporters, are not going to want to see.

We see accident benefits, Mr. Speaker, gone up in third-party liability. One of the cures, the last time we dealt with these problems back in 2005

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: – was to boost the deductible. That is no longer acceptable because the amount of dollar claims, for example, went up as a result of that just to account for the deductibles. The only people who benefited were the people who were handling the claims at the same time.

We have the chance here of consumers now who are going to be lumped in under the Facility Association, who are going to be seeing these massive increases, too, coming down the road. It is coming at them like a freight train because, of course, the higher the insurance rates that go on, the more the government is going to have to deal with the problem.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, Trout River has definitely been in the news in the last month to month-and-a-half or so on account of the massive blue whale having come there. Trout River has now had international news, international attention, and international focus. Mr. Speaker, the blue whale is now gone. The blue whale in Rocky Harbour is gone. Both are off to the ROM, and one hopefully coming back to MUN, but cellphone service is still missing. We have gone through a whole cycle of blue whales, exploding blue whales, the whole world watching Trout River, and Trout River pleading and begging for cellphone coverage, for the government just to work with the private sector to see what sort of a proposal could come forward.

Clearly, I offered to the minister some time ago that I would absolutely be keen to put together a group to make a proposal, if government would only endorse that we want to do this sort of proposal. Mr. Speaker, this is just a simple request by people from Trout River to ask if government will work with the private sector, as they worked with the private sector in many communities for many needed and good faith ventures, to work with the people of Trout River for cellphone coverage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I am happy to be able to stand and enter this petition. The petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS hundreds of residents of the South Coast of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador including residents of the communities of Burgeo, Ramea, Grey River, and François use Route 480 on a regular basis for work, medical, education, and social reasons; and

WHEREAS there is no cellphone coverage on Route 480; and

WHEREAS residents and users of Route 480 require cellphone coverage to ensure their safety and communication abilities; and

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

WHEREAS the residents and users of Route 480 feel that the Department of IBRD should also invest in cellphone coverage for rural Newfoundland and Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House to support the users of Route 480 in their request to obtain cellphone coverage along Route 480.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is obviously something I have presented on numerous occasions here in this House, and I will continue to do so. I have no choice because government refuses to live up to their promise that they made. It is funny because sometimes we, as MHAs, get offers to speak to school kids and to people in high schools. One of the things that I have done – and it is not just Route 480; it is also Route 470. I have two routes in my district that have not gotten service.

I have actually gone to the high schools and talked to the kids about this. That is one of the things that again I get asked every single time,

they say: Why don't we have it? Wasn't it promised? How does that work? They do not understand really how it works. I explain: Well, it was a promise, but sometimes government does not live up to their promises; maybe they are just platforms.

The bigger problem that I have beyond that is that I have asked for a number of years now, very simply: What areas of the Province do not have it? I understand the private aspect to it. I get that, but every time you ask a question you get shouted at and told: Well, you just do not understand it. I get that part. My question is: What is government doing to work on this with private partnerships to see if we can address this very necessary issue?

I have even asked: What areas of the Province are not covered? I still do not get anything. Lately, government has sort of gone down to the final point of saying: What would you do? We are going to have to work on this. We have asked simple questions and until we get this basic information, it is hard to address it. It is an essential service.

I hope the members on the other side who have the same issue would address it as well because it affects all of us. I look forward to continuing to enter these with the hopes of actually getting something done and making government live up to a promise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move Motion 7 from the Order Paper, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, June 3, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 3, 2014.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I move Motion 8, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn this evening at 10:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 3, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 3, 2014.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 1, third reading of a bill.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000, Bill 13, be now read the third time.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 13 be read a third time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 13)

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

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000”, read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 13)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This time I call from the Order Paper, Order 2.

I move, seconded by the Member for Lewisporte, that An Act To Amend The Dispensing Opticians Act, 2005, Bill 19, be read the third time.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 19 be read a third time?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Dispensing Opticians Act, 2005. (Bill 19)

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

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The Dispensing Opticians Act, 2005”, read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 19)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I now move to Order 3. I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that an Act to Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2, Bill 20, be now read the third time.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 20 be read a third time?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, Act to Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. (Bill 20)

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

On motion, a bill, “Act to Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2”, read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 20)

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. I move that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am certainly delighted to have the opportunity to say a few words on this year’s Budget debate.

I have had the opportunity to be here for, I think, eleven Budgets and I have had the privilege now

to deliver five of them. Four of them were surpluses, I might add. This is my first, and I guess the only opportunity I will have to speak on the Budget in the capacity as Premier.

Having served as Finance Minister for so many years, I am intimately aware of the extensive work that is required to go into preparing a budget. I think maybe a lot of people who may be watching, and maybe even some members do not recognize how much work actually goes into preparing this Budget. Most people never get to see the work that is done behind the scenes. It is a lengthy process. It draws together literally dozens upon dozens of officials of the Department of Finance and in every department and agency in government. It is not just the Department of Finance.

Not only do they work with a vast array of data and dollar figures, but they also have to explore the implications of each and every choice we weigh as we try to arrive at the document that you see before you. I can tell you there is a lot of argument that goes into that. Some people say sometimes there is even blood on the floor in the difference of opinions as to which proposals, which initiatives we are going to fund. Because in many cases there are a lot of initiatives, a lot of proposals that we wish we could fund but we just simply cannot because as high as our revenues are you cannot do everything.

I think that is why they call economics the dismal science. You have unlimited wants and needs but you only have a fixed amount of resources. Therefore, we are left with that famous question; you have to make a decision as to how, what and for whom those resources we do have get allocated.

As I said in the House yesterday, there is a arising amount of discussion and public debate in the world about inequality and about ensuring that – given the fact that after the Second World War there was great economic growth and the economic growth seemed to get distributed equally amongst all people; but lately, since the 1980s, growth has not been that strong. It seems the upper 1 per cent or the wealthier people are taking more and more of that economic growth and, therefore, less of it is available for the middle class – which is shrinking – and less is available for lower income people.

We have been very fortunate here. We have been very fortunate in this Province that we have been blessed to have these resources, the oil, the gas, the hydro to make electricity, the wind. We are sitting here with all of these resources, most of which have not even been developed yet. We are sitting next to the biggest market. The biggest market in the world is going to be demanding; the biggest energy market is going to be demanding those resources. I think that augurs very well for the future of this place and the future of our children and grandchildren. It is wonderful, wonderful news.

As each Budget Day approaches, the parking lots out here are full and the lights are burning into the wee hours as our officials work to produce a budget that will stand up to the scrutiny of the Comptroller General, which is the government's chief accountant, the Auditor General, who is an independent officer of this House – not the government but this House of Assembly – the banks and the bond rating agencies, and, of course, the Opposition parties, the news media and organizations, and citizens throughout the whole Province. Our public employees work tirelessly to produce their very best work and that attention to detail gives us confidence as we defend the Budget.

Let me start today by giving my thanks and congratulating our very competent Finance Minister and her officials.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: The officials and our colleagues throughout the entire government for everything they have done and everything they continue to do on behalf of the people of our Province to enable us to manage public spending in this Province responsibly and accountably.

I also want to acknowledge the work of the Opposition. The Opposition caucuses, the Official Opposition and the NDP, because they too have an important role to play in this annual Budget process, which we do every year. Parliamentary democracy is grounded on a principle, and is grounded on the principle that effective opposition serves the public good. The work that we as a government do must pass through the fire and be tested, and when our

choices are challenged they must bear up to the scrutiny, and if better options emerge, then we can adjust course.

If the choices we have made prove to be the best options, the better options, and I believe this year they have been, then we can proceed with confidence, secure in the knowledge that all of us, as the people's representatives, have done our part to serve the public good. Let's never forget that scrutiny is very valuable, and let us never fear scrutiny – not because we are perfect, because we are not, we are human. That means we are all prone to make mistakes from time to time. No one likes to have their errors held up for public display, but in conducting the business of the people, scrutiny is essential.

More important than protecting our dignity is the importance of getting it right. That is why we welcome scrutiny, own up to mistakes when they happen, and take corrective action where appropriate to yield a better product. That is good governance in action. Scrutiny keeps us on our toes. It probably keeps some mistakes from happening in the first place, and that is a good thing.

In the Estimates committee, and in this Chamber, just as in the Cabinet room, and in our respective offices, we have all been examining this year's Budget with the finest of fine-tooth combs. That is why I have even more confidence now in this year's Budget than when it was first delivered, because it has endured the scrutiny of those most motivated to find flaws and it has stood the test.

Every dollar is important, and let's never lose sight of why scrutiny is so important. Every dollar we budget is a dollar we have been entrusted to manage by the people of the Province, the people who placed us here, and we owe them our full attention. We owe them our full attention to detail and to our very best judgement.

Every dollar we spend from the public Treasury is the people's money, it is their children's money, and that fact should weigh heavily on our hearts, no matter what our respective roles may be. We serve the people of the Province, let us never forget that. In a democracy such as ours, the power resides with the people and our

overriding obligation is to serve their best interest. That is why we are here.

That is why it is so important we abide by the highest standards of fiscal management, but it is also why we need to abide by the highest standards of long-term strategic planning. As we dig down into the numbers, we cannot lose sight of the bigger picture. Our government remains focused to make Newfoundland and Labrador even stronger, ready to seize opportunities that are all around us, ready to lead both nationally and ready to lead internationally as well.

Now, over the years we have been fortunate to have seen many surpluses. In the last ten years, I think we have had six surpluses. I was lucky enough to be able to present four surpluses in the five Budgets I delivered; but, at the same time, we were able to intensify our investments, through the strength, through the fundamentals of our economy, and spread the wealth, distribute the wealth around to the people who need it. Isn't that why we are in government? Isn't that why we want to see the economy grow? I think all of us, regardless of what political party we represent, we want to grow the pie so that we can distribute wealth to people who need it, to vulnerable people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, that is why I entered public life, that is why I am here, and I think that is why most of you are here as well.

This year, unfortunately, circumstances have changed somewhat, but we understand why they have changed and why the change is only temporary. That is why we are confident that we have made the right choice this year to respond accordingly. Instead of abandoning the successful course we are on, we are not going to operate year to year. We have a plan. We have a ten-year strategic plan in place and when times toughen a bit, we are not going to slash and burn. I have used that expression before and I know the communications people hate it when I say that, but we are going to take a ten-year plan. We know where we have to get to, and we can do a little bit at a time, but we have to make sure we do not hurt people in the process.

It is a 10-Year Sustainability Plan. We understand this year's borrowing is the means of maintaining our momentum, retaining our strength, but we will return to surplus in 2015 and the year after. We are going to be stronger for making the choice than we would have been if we had simply panicked.

We recognize that the trajectory our Province has taking is from record debt towards fiscal sustainability. We are going from weakness to strength, from decline to growth, from poverty to prosperity. You have seen the graphs in the Budget and you have seen the graphs in the Economy documents, and the trends are unmistakable. The Province's circumstances are improving steadily, and the people are better off now than when we started because of the choices that we have made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: So let's remain focused on the prize, which is long-term sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, on January 24, I was sworn in as Premier of this Province, much to my surprise; indeed, much to my shock. There was not a heck of a lot of time for me to think about what I would do if I ever became Premier. I was Premier before I knew it, but I made several commitments when I was sworn in.

I said that the important work of government would proceed unabated, and it has. I said we would continue to govern responsibly, and we have. I said we would continue to fulfill the mandate that we were given by the people of the Province in the 2011 general election to foster growth, to strengthen communities, and to meet the needs of Newfoundland and Labrador people and our families, and so we have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: I said at the time that the motto of my time in office would be words in Deuteronomy that the prophet Moses used to try to set the highest standard for all those who would serve in public office. What he said was, "Justice, justice shall you pursue...."

Justice is not criminal justice in this sense. Justice means that all people of the Province, all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should share fully and fairly in the benefits of our new-found prosperity. They should have a voice in the way that prosperity is distributed. Justice means intensifying our fight against poverty, against inequality, and never forgetting the needs of those who are elderly, those who have disabilities, those who are infirmed, and those who live on fixed and low incomes.

Fundamental justice demands that we govern not just with our head, but with our heart and with our conscience. We must listen. We must plan. We have to do the right thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: In the weeks following my swearing-in, my colleagues and I worked together developing a Budget plan that would reflect those principles through practical choices with tangible benefits for the people of the Province.

What choices did we make and are they defensible? We have been criticized for the choices we have made. After all the scrutiny, I feel more strongly than ever that the choices are the right ones. I want to recap some of those, and I know that my colleagues have raised these in the House. I do not think people are going to say that these were bad choices.

We extended the freeze in tuition at Memorial and the College of the North Atlantic. We announced the elimination of provincial student loans and the replacement with up-front grants that graduates never have to repay. Isn't that wonderful?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: When we talk about inequality, the first way to get people out of poverty is to make sure they are educated. If you are educated, if you have early child care, if you have early learning, if you have things like all-day Kindergarten, and if you can go to university or to trade school and get the skills you need and get the education you need to survive and to prosper in a complex but vibrant economy, that is the way everybody – no matter

what family you come from, everybody has the opportunity and everybody has the chance to do well.

We invested \$40 million to train and advance apprentices in high demand skilled trades so they can get the many jobs that are opening up. We put \$170 million in initiatives under our Poverty Reduction Strategy. We have invested a billion dollars in poverty reduction. Isn't that wonderful?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Minister Shea retired yesterday and she spearheaded that. I remember very well when that came in and it was a strategy we said we were going to take this Province from a province having one of the highest poverty rates or the highest poverty rate of the country to a province that had one of the lowest rates. Ten years later, we have the second lowest rate. That is wonderful. That is awesome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Of all the things, Mr. Speaker, that we have done here in the last ten years, that is the one that means the most to me and, I would suggest, to most of you as well.

I believe in a wise investment of public money to help our most vulnerable citizens to escape the grips of poverty, and I think everyone in this House agrees. Although fewer people now than ever before are on Income Support, some of the Province still continued to need this assistance so we did the right thing by raising the basic rate. We also raised the low income tax reduction threshold, taking more low-income families completely off the provincial tax rolls, completely off the burden – we are removing the burden of personal income tax.

The Senior's Benefit, low-income seniors – I do not know how many times we increased this, but we made this program five times more in value than it was ten years ago, helping seniors. We invested in a vehicle accessibility program and inclusion grants to help improve the lives of people with disabilities. We expanded the Home Modification Program to provide greater reliance among persons with disabilities and

seniors who live at home, enabling them to remain in their homes and not have to be moved to institutions.

We extended the Residential Energy Efficiency Program to lower homeowners' energy costs. We expanded the Rent Supplement Program and the Supportive Living Program. We invested in new affordable housing and the Provincial Home Repair Program, and we invested more funding to help fight homelessness, so that we have a budget each year now that is over \$5 million to help combat homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are starting to work on a new prison. We are trying to get the feds to join with us on that. Many Justice Ministers have tried and were not successful, but now it is time and we are going to do the job alone because, obviously, that facility is needed.

Police officers: After the Lamer Inquiry, we invested very heavily in police officers this year, new police officers for the growing and booming Labrador, and expanding Memorial's Police Studies program to train more officers for the RNC.

We are investing in police services aimed at preventing intimate partner violence, and I tried to get to that during Question Period and I did not have the opportunity to do so. This is another arrow in the quiver, in the fight against family violence.

It is not a panacea, it is not a cure, but it will certainly help. It is money for additional police officers in both forces to go around the Province and train our police forces throughout the whole Province – not in one area but throughout the whole Province – to help them recognize women and families who are at high risk to having violence perpetrated against them. It is a preventive measure. It is not intended to replace the Family Violence Intervention Court. It is another tool, along with the Family Violence Protection Act, and along with the court. More tools to help deal with this very complex and very serious issue.

We are launching part two of the Violence Prevention Initiative this year to build on the many initiatives that were taken out under Phase

I. We are bringing social workers into the communities that need them. We are investing finally in providing a new courthouse in the Provincial Court in Stephenville. Stephenville is one of the busiest courts in Newfoundland and Labrador and the courthouse that is there is long past its life. It is totally inappropriate for a courthouse for that town. I was very pleased that we have taken the decision to start with the planning and build that courthouse.

We are investing in training and support for foster families, in early childhood learning. We are moving to full-day Kindergarten. We are investing to retain teachers in the K-12 and maintain the best pupil-teacher ratio of any province in the country. We are increasing student assistant support for students with identified need. There is \$128 million in K-12 infrastructure. We are expanding access to assessment and treatment for children with autism and other development conditions.

In health, we are expanding the home dialysis program. The Medical Transportation Assistance Program is being enhanced now I think for the third time. We are extending coverage under the Prescription Drug Program. We are increasing the allowable benefit for basic adult dental services. There are new drug therapies for cancer, a second methadone maintenance treatment team to help people battle addictions, and invest in programs to help people quit smoking.

We are growing the Home Support Program. We are increasing personal care home and community care home subsidies. We are expanding the Basic 911 service Province-wide. We are investing in new and expanded health care infrastructure. We are moving to replace Western Memorial Regional Hospital in Corner Brook and offering new services in that hospital.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a Cabinet shuffle. Some Cabinet ministers have been in positions for a long period of time. It is always a good thing to shuffle Cabinet and let the ministers take on additional responsibilities or new responsibility.

I want to take this moment to pay tribute to the Minister of Innovation, who was formally the Minister of Health. She is one of the most

conscientious and diligent ministers that this Province has ever known.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: She is capable of running any department in government, including the one I run. She has spearheaded initiatives in the Department of Health that have made the health care system better for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Under her watch we have become a Canadian leader in wait times for cataract surgeries, hip and knee replacement surgeries, certain cardiac procedures, and radiation therapy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Under her leadership we have improved ER wait times. We have introduced a generic drugs policy, which saves Newfoundlanders and Labradorians their hard-earned money, helps seniors have lower drug costs, built long-term care facilities across the Province, introduced the Province's first long-term care strategy and, as I said, expanded the medical care transportation program – which is one that is important to me – I think three times.

She has been a tireless advocate around the Cabinet table for dialysis, cancer care, diabetes care, and a host of other health and wellness issues affecting the people of the Province. She has served the people of Newfoundland extremely well and they are lucky to have her.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: As I finish up with health, I can say that after all the scrutiny, Mr. Speaker, I still believe that these are good choices, they are sound choices, and they are the right choices for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Shared Prosperity, I mentioned some of the initiatives. What about the initiatives to share our prosperity and spread the wealth around so that all regions will reap the benefits of growth, diversify, and come into their own?

We brought forward major initiatives this year, and I am sure members have raised these: \$81 million in provincial roads, highways and bridges; financing on ferries, marine terminals and wharves. We invested in brush cutting to make our highways safer; hundreds of millions of dollars invested in our municipalities, and announcements are going to be made this summer. The largest investment ever in our volunteer firefighters throughout Newfoundland and Labrador will be made this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, these people are not paid. These people are volunteers who every day are on call to serve their community, and protect their homes and protect their families. I am delighted we can make this investment in order to show our appreciation for what they do every day.

We have talked about just about \$5 million has gone into high-speed Internet; \$4.9 million. We have already invested \$29 million, that has leveraged \$115 million, and 95 per cent of houses in the Province now have access to broadband.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: We have streamlined programs that provide direct investment in business and regional development, and proving their productivity, giving them a competitive edge because these are the keys to their success and continuing prosperity.

We are teaming up with the Atlantic Provinces to invest in a Build Ventures fund. We are establishing our own seed capital fund, Venture Newfoundland and Labrador Fund, because we are going to provide the start-up funds that new companies, new businesses who have done their research and development in the information industry so that they can take their ideas, develop new products and new services that can create new business and provide opportunity and wealth and jobs for the people of the Province.

We growing industries in the ocean technology, Arctic technology and, as I mentioned, the knowledge based sector. In the Arctic, that is

going to be the great frontier. I was at the Houston offshore oil show, and we announced there that St. John's, Newfoundland has been awarded the Arctic Technology Conference for 2016, beating out Moscow. That is great news.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: We reduced our small business corporate income tax rate to 3 per cent, the lowest in Atlantic Canada. About 6,000 small businesses are expected to benefit. We all know about CETA that is going to breathe new life and new opportunities into our fishing industry.

I am going to go up in a few minutes and talk to the Italian Consulate-General and we are going to talk about CETA. We are going to talk about fish entering that market and what that is going to do for the fishing industry here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: We have helped negotiate that. We have been criticized for this by some but the fisheries union representing fisheries workers and the fish processors agree with us, that this is a good news story and a wide open door of opportunity.

We are investing in fishery science. We are investing in fisheries research and development, in marketing, in capacity building, so we will be ready for the opportunities once they emerge; \$5 million is going into the aquaculture capital equity investment program; \$25 million in public investment; and aquaculture has leveraged \$400 million from the private sector and has rejuvenated entire regions of the Province; \$12 million is going to grow and diversify our agriculture and agrifoods industry. I cannot say enough how exciting the agriculture and agrifoods industry – and I want to encourage youth in this Province to take a look. I want them to look at it very seriously because there are some very exciting opportunities in that sector that young people should take a look at, and I think they will be very interested if they do.

In forestry, we know the problems the forestry industry is facing. We know there is 5,500 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians involved in

that industry and we know they are all interconnected. So, we know the importance of the mill because it was not an investment just of the mill; it was an investment to the entire industry.

Tourism marketing: We have all talked about the ads. We are also investing to drive new oil exploration. The geoscience had to come first. Because with the geoscience, after the geoscience, more people come in, they are interested and then they start exploring and drilling. In the North Sea and the Gulf of Mexico 3,000 or 4,000 wells have been drilled. Offshore Newfoundland and Labrador, guess how many? A little over 200. There is a connection between geoscience and when the oil comes out the other end. You start with a geoscience.

We also are changing our land tenure licensing in order to encourage additional companies, because we are seeing a lot of the same companies applying each year. We are happy with that, we are glad they are there, but we would like to see some more come. We are doing two or three wells a year, we want to see that up to six or seven, and then we would like to see it to ten or twelve.

Of course, as everyone knows, we are investing to develop our hydro power potential, giving the people the cleanest power at the lowest and the fairest rates, meeting the demands that the people of this Province are going to have here on the Island and in Labrador; but, generating profits, because we are going to have a surplus, we are going to have more than we need. Now, for the first time in our history, we are going to be able to take that surplus to market without going through the Province of Quebec, and seizing those opportunities and generating revenues that will come back to the people of the Province to be used as government sees fit, to either lower hydro rates or invest in new hydro projects, or invest in general revenues, health care, education, family violence protection, housing, and the list goes on and on.

The choices we have made are good ones, they follow on years of good choices, and we are reaping benefits that demonstrate their effectiveness. How do we measure how well the Province is doing after a decade of governance?

We are light years ahead of where we were a decade ago. Our public debt is billions of dollars less than when we took office. Most of the remaining debt is due to the unfunded liabilities in the various public sector pension plans. Addressing these liabilities in co-operation and collaboration with our public sector unions is a priority for this government, and I know the Finance Minister is working on that. Consistently, we have made this clear, and we remain committed to finding a solution that will put these pension plans on a sound and sustainable basis.

So, what do the bond rating agencies say about us? What do they say we are doing? I know the Leader of the Opposition and I, we get up and we have two different views. I look at the positive; he looks at the negative. So what do the experts say?

Moody's, Standard & Poor's, Dominion Bond Rating Service all place us higher than we have ever been rated before.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Dominion Bond Rating Service in December acknowledged our 10-Year Sustainability Plan illustrates the Province's willingness to tackle its pressing challenges and committing to fiscal soundness. The Conference Board of Canada: On May 15, the Conference Board of Canada issued its economic report card for the provinces. Using hard data, they ranked Newfoundland and Labrador alongside Alberta and Saskatchewan as the top performers of all provinces – the top.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: They gave us an A⁺ rating, so we are not only ahead of Ontario; we are ahead of Quebec, BC, Manitoba, and the Maritimes. We are also ahead of Canada, its national performance, and ahead of twenty-six other jurisdictions in the world, including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Germany, and even the model, Norway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: We are leading the entire country in foreign direct investment performance, and also in employment growth.

The Conference Board did not only look at GDP, because as Bobby Kennedy used to say: You cannot eat GDP. They were looking at a wide range of factors indicating the strength of an economy. They measured productivity and said that most provinces continue to record weak growth in labour productivity.

They went on to say that there is no silver bullet for improving productivity, a number of factors merit examination and change. Investing more in machinery and equipment, particularly information and communications technology equipment, fostering innovation, and attracting more foreign direct investment, are regularly cited as the key way to boost productivity. That is what they are saying.

So, how are we doing? How are we doing in what the Conference Board of Canada says we should be doing? Well, here is a direct quote, “At the provincial level, it is the resource-intensive provinces – Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador – that invest more in machinery and equipment per worker than the United States does.”

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Then they talk about ways to promote innovation and included initiatives such as credits and programs that encourage business spending on research and development, investments in public infrastructure, reductions in barriers to trade, foreign direct investment, and labour mobility.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you will be pleased to know that they have just described many of the key initiatives that our government has been taking and facilitating. Infrastructure investments, free trade agreements with the European Union, with South Korea, and of course our neighbours to the South, and labour mobility agreements in the Atlantic region. I can also say that the agreement on internal trade, I understand that is now ready to go and to be negotiated. I know the minister is aware of that. Direct investments in research and development through business development programs, diversification

programs, venture capital initiatives, the Research & Development Corporation, fishing science and R&D, forestry research and innovation, agriculture research and innovation, all of these things that we are doing in this year's Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Not only does the Conference Board of Canada say that we are leading the country with an A⁺ and surpassing the top industrial countries of the world in our performance, but they show we are making the right choices for further growth by focusing on diversification. Because we know that the non-renewable resources – we know the oil is going to be gone one day, so we have to make sure that we diversify the economy, we have to modernize, we have to innovate, and we have to attract investment into those areas.

Mr. Speaker, this will be a very exciting year for Newfoundland and Labrador. The economy will continue to be strong. Our real GDP will continue to grow after leading the country in growth last year, but again you cannot eat GDP. Our economy is driven by capital investment. We led the country last year. It is going to go up to \$12.6 billion in annual capital investment, and that is what is driving employment in this country. Capital investment is coming in because they like what they see here, and that means the major projects.

So, what is happening? Capital investment is driving employment. People are being paid high wages. The average weekly wages exceeded the national average for the first time last year; they are continuing to grow this year.

I heard a story the other day that someone in Labrador was paying a cook – I think the Minister of Transportation and Works told me that – \$21 an hour the cook was being paid. When Muskrat Falls came in, that cook is now making \$45 an hour. This is prosperity for many people in the Province.

So we have people working; more people employed. It is a new record. We have never had as many people working in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador as we have this

year. Isn't that amazing? It is absolutely amazing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: The unemployment rate, at 11.4 per cent, is the lowest it has been in forty years. We are no longer the Province with the worst unemployment rate. That is amazing. People are working, they are making money, and we are seeing the effects of it in retail sales. We are seeing the effects of it in housing starts. We are seeing the effects of it in car sales. Last year car sales were the highest year ever for car sales in the Province.

Oil production is expected to increase. Income is expected to grow; but, unfortunately, there are things over which we have no control. We cannot control market prices for commodities such as oil and minerals. They go up and down; we do not control them. We do not control currency exchange rates. We cannot accelerate the world's rise from global recession and keep one from happening.

We do not control interest rates. We do not control the value of the dollar. We have no influence on the US Federal Reserve System's decisions about quantitative easing and things like that. Yet, all of these factors can directly or indirectly have an enormous impact on the state of our finances as they reverberate through the world economy.

Instead of lamenting the things that we cannot change, we focused our efforts on the things we can change. The things we can do are the things that we are doing, and we are doing well. As the Conference Board of Canada and the bond rating agencies and the banks have all pointed out.

The right approach, Mr. Speaker, is not solely a matter of fiscal accounting, as I mentioned earlier. It is not just a matter of counting the beans. It is not just a matter of how our GDP is doing. It is more about people. It is more about vulnerable people, about families, those facing special challenges, and seniors, persons with disabilities, persons who are ill, minorities, and children. We would not serve any of them by running our economy into the ground as some would do in an effort to help them, but at the same time we cannot plow our economy over

those who are standing before us asking for compassion and asking for a helping hand up.

Striking the perfect balance means choosing the middle path between spending yourself into a hole and pruning yourself to death. Finding the middle path is possible only when you take the long view and you see where your choices are going to lead. Well, we have made choices that will neither bankrupt this Province nor bankrupt the vulnerable but make us all stronger in the long run. That is the middle way: conservative, and at the same time progressive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: The choices we make shape the society we share. A decade ago we were a society in crisis, scoring low marks on one metric after another. Confidence was lagging, hope was lacking, leadership was lacking. Let's not forget, that many of the key policies shaping our circumstances today were sorely lacking then.

There was no Energy Plan then. There was no equity stake in offshore projects. There was no Nalcor to drive exploration and investment. There was no project to develop the Lower Churchill under terms favourable to Newfoundland and Labrador supplying clean hydro power to the Island to displace Holyrood oil.

There was no Poverty Reduction Strategy. There was no Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador. There was no 10-Year Sustainability Plan. There was no Violence Prevention Initiative Part I or Part II. There was no full-day Kindergarten. There was no ATIPP legislation in effect. There was no Auditor General in the House of Assembly, and there was no whistleblower legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: There was no initiative to replace student loans with non-repayable grants. There was no decade long legacy of tuition freezes that gave our students the lowest tuition rates in the country. Because we were not seeing those initiatives, we were not reaping the benefit. All of those actions we have taken where others offered only platitudes.

Anyone can make a promise, and a well-articulated promise can put stars in people's eyes. What truly counts in the final analysis is implementation and delivery. We stand on our record of delivering actions and results for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, there is more to be done under the wise leadership of the Premier who will follow me. Judging by the recent speech he gave to Rotary here in St. John's and the attention that he gathered, I believe the people are very eager to see the plans that he wants to deliver. Knowing him personally, I can say with confidence that our Province is going to be in very good hands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, let me say that it has been an honour for me to be captain of this team to guide this transition that has taken place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: It has truly been a team effort. I want to thank each and every member of this team for making possible the actions we have taken. I have heard the passion in your voices as you stood day after day to state your conviction that we are on the right course.

I have heard all the arguments and the counter-arguments and now as we prepare to vote on this year's Budget, I believe more resolutely than ever that it is the right Budget for 2014. We are stronger and we are going to continue to be stronger because of the course that all of us, that we, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has taken.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to clue up our Budget debate. It has been nearly six weeks, and it has been quite the process, Mr. Speaker, a process like I have never encountered before.

It is a very hard act to follow after that very invigorating speech, and while the Premier has done this five times, this is my first. I have to say, it has been quite the experience. There have been many debates along the way. There have been many discussions along the way, back to debating, back to discussions, lots of exchanges of ideas. Every single word that was said by our caucus, our Cabinet, our Premier, was certainly in the best interest of the people of the Province, and every decision that we made was made with their best interest at heart.

I really want to thank the Premier for his insight and his mentorship to me in this process, and to thank him for his vision. I also want to thank my Cabinet colleagues. As I said, it was quite an experience, sometimes gruelling, but also very, very rewarding, and I want to thank the officials in their departments for the long hours, the long analysis and work that has gone into this process. I really want to thank the officials in the Department of Finance. Oftentimes it was a treat if they got home in the same day that they came to work, because they would often leave after midnight, and they worked really hard to get us to this Budget process.

As I said, I really want to thank my colleagues and the Premier, and certainly thank the MHAs. The MHAs worked very diligently in each of their districts. They brought to the caucus table many items of importance to their constituents, and those items were reflected in this year's Budget, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Opposition parties. The Estimates process is a very valuable process. I think we can all agree to how valuable the Estimates process was and an opportunity to have a great exchange of question and answer.

I want to thank all the people who came out to pre-Budget consultations. I have to say that was a really, really good experience for me. It was an opportunity to hear from people on the ground and the work they are doing, and how they touch people's lives every single day, the volunteer organizations, the medical

professionals who showed up, and people who work with vulnerable people every day.

I think when the Premier was sworn in he made it very clear that we would listen as a government. The people I spoke to post-Budget now reflect back to pre-Budget consultations and they said, you committed to listening and you truly did listen. Many of the things that we asked for in pre-Budget consultations were reflected in this Budget and we thank you for that.

When the Premier was sworn in, he said that day he would have a focus on assisting vulnerable people. That would have been a clear focus for him, a focus around social justice and a fair society. That was reflected right in the theme of our Budget.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the things we have done in the Budget – and I certainly will not highlight all of them – but things that I heard from MHAs and from constituents everywhere: the Seniors' Benefit is the highest it has ever been, \$1,036 this year up from \$971 last year; the low-income threshold, the fourth time we have increased that since we have been in government; the increase for Income Support, a 5 per cent increase there.

Maybe I am telling secrets here, Premier, but we remember talking about what we could do. Can you do more? Can we do more for them? Go back and see if you can do more. That is where his head was. I am so proud of that and all the work we have done around housing. That was such a big priority for him and for the minister in that department. When you look at the initiatives in the Budget for persons with disabilities, the stories we heard of the vehicle retrofit program and what an impact that had on people's lives and how we take that for granted.

When you look at our investments in health care – and I can say that the second most thing I have had comments on is our changes to the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. People struggle when they have health issues. One of the things they should not have to struggle with is financial issues, Mr. Speaker. We have made significant improvements to that program this year. It is something we are very proud of.

When you look at autism, what we have done in health care and in the Department of Education around Autism and the investments we have made there to increase the number of people working to improve the lives of children with autism. When you look at improvements we have made to cancer drugs and making it easier for people – and we all know people who have cancer and making it easier for them.

The Premier spoke of our tuition freeze and the loans to grants. In fact, we have an invitation, just this week, on Thursday evening I will be presenting on behalf of government to the Canadian Federation of Students at their national AGM. They invited us to that event because they say we are the leaders in the country when it comes to education. They wanted us there to share our experience. I will be the keynote there.

When you look at our focus on justice and the investments we have made into organized crime, when you look at the increase in RCMP officers and the increase in the recruits in the RNC officers, it is something that we cannot afford not to do. When you look at our strong focus on economy and the reduction in the small business tax, which now makes us the lowest in Atlantic Canada, tied with Nova Scotia.

No focus on economy can go without a focus on children. We have to give our children the best start in life they can possibly get. For me, and I know for the former Minister of Education and for all of my colleagues, one of the things that I have heard the most about since Budget 2014 – and one of the things I am personally most proud of as a member of this Cabinet – is the full-day Kindergarten, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: While it is very much a social initiative, it is very much an economic initiative as well. They will have better outcomes in life because of early learning.

Mr. Speaker, I think the best compliment that this government has received about this Budget, and that I will take with me for a very long time, was by a blogger in *The Telegram*. She referred to this Budget as a maternal Budget. For a

government, I do not think there is any better compliment you can get than that.

Mr. Speaker, our future is very bright when you look at Statoil and how it is the largest oil find in the world by volume. The opportunities for our children, for my daughter, for members of the Opposition's children, for all of our children and then their children – it is just so exciting to think about the opportunities they have before them. This did not happen by accident. This happened because of strategic decision making on the part of this government.

The Premier did outline what others have had to say and I will just quickly highlight that again. The Conference Board of Canada gave us an A⁺ rating, Mr. Speaker. It does not get much better than an A⁺ for the many teachers in this room and for the students in this room.

Mr. Speaker, what I heard in previous speeches by the Leader of the Opposition is that they want to change that. To change from A⁺, there is only one place to go from A⁺. Why you would want to change that I am not sure.

When you look at the BMO Blue Book released in May, 2014 – and this is a quote, “The Muskrat-Falls hydroelectric project and the Hebron, Terra Nova, Hibernia and White Rose offshore energy projects continue to mature and provide high paying jobs and yield considerable economic spinoffs for the province. Statoil and Husky's Bay du Nord discovery northeast of St. John's is also an exciting energy development for the province.” It was only a couple of years ago that Mark Carney said, “We would all do well to follow the example of Newfoundland and Labrador.”

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, when you look at the credit ratings and the history of the credit ratings – when you look at Moody's we have had two upgrades since we have been in power. When you look at Standard & Poor's, there were two upgrades there with them. When you look at Dominion Bond Rating Service, there were three upgrades there. These are all outside experts speaking to what it is Newfoundland and Labrador is doing here, and what a great job is being done.

Mr. Speaker, that is the bright side. Then you have to look at what the Leader of the Opposition had to say, we are the worst, the last, and the lowest. This is in a speech that he did to many supporters.

We do not see things that way, Mr. Speaker. There is a saying that the glass is half full. Well, on our side of the House the glass is over pouring. When you look at the other side of the House, I would not even say it is quarter full.

I remember taking an economics course several years ago as a part of an MBA program – and there are many factors that go into the economy and how the economy is doing. One of the critical factors is the perception of how the economy is doing. The perception from this side of the House is very much a bright one. Mr. Speaker, the perception from the other side of the House, the glass is certainly far from half full. It is not the best attraction strategy, and certainly not a speech you want to bring to our students on their graduation ceremonies.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by a quote that I used in the Budget Speech, and it is one that I think is truly relevant to this government; destiny does not happen by chance, it happens by choice. Our choice as a government is to continue on the path to prosperity that we have been doing for the people of the Province. That is certainly reflected in Budget 2014.

I know that the members on this side of the House will be voting for this Budget. I truly thank the Premier, my Cabinet colleagues, my caucus colleagues, and members of the Opposition. I know because of the great things in this Budget that I am certain all members of this House will vote for the Budget.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have received a message from his hon. the Lieutenant Governor.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House approve in general the budgetary policies of the government.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Summon the members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Marshall, Mr. King, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Davis, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Felix Collins, Ms Johnson, Mr. Jackman, Mr. French, Mr. Verge, Mr. Littlejohn, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Dalley, Ms Sullivan, Mr. Kent, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Granter, Mr. Cross, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Forsey, Ms Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Peach, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Dinn, and Mr. Russell.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Joyce, Ms Dempster, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Lane, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Bennett, Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, and Ms Rogers.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, the 'ayes' thirty-one; the 'nays' fourteen.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have received a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

MR. SPEAKER: All rise.

As the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit Estimates of the sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending March 31, 2015, by way of further supply and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867, I recommend these Estimates to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: _____
Frank F. Fagan, CM, ONL, MBA

Please be seated.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that the message be referred to a Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House do now resolve itself into a Committee of Supply 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 will be considering the resolution and Supply bill.

Resolution

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2015 the sum of \$4,658,836,400.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 inclusive, carried.

CLERK: The schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the schedule carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, schedule carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: Whereas it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2015 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2015 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution and bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed a resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$4,658,836,400 for the 2014-2015 fiscal year be carried and I further move that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$4,658,836,400 for the year 2014-2015 be carried and that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto, 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 Supply have considered the matters to them referred, and have directed me to report that they have passed the amount of \$4,658,836,400 contained in the Estimates of Supply for the 2014-2015 fiscal year and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution, and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

AN HON. MEMBER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2015 the sum of \$4,658,836,400.”

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2015 the sum of \$4,658,836,400.”

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce the Supply bill, Bill 11, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce the Supply bill, Bill 11, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce the Supply bill, Bill 11, and that the said bill be now read a first time?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2015 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service”, carried. (Bill 11)

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2015 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 11)

On motion, Bill 11 read a first time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the said bill be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The

Financial Year Ending March 31, 2015 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 11)

On motion, Bill 11 read a second time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the said Supply bill be now a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2015 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 11)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2015 And For Other Purposes Relating To the Public Service", read a third time, ordered passed and that its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 11)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3, to move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco, Bill 12.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole.

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 be considering Bill 12.

Resolution

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I rise in the House today to introduce an amendment to the Revenue Administration Act to allow for the recent tobacco tax increases as announced in the Budget. Budget 2014 brings an increase in the tax for both cigarettes and fine-cut tobacco. Effective 12:01 a.m. March 28, 2014 the tax increases by three cents per cigarette and by six cents per gram on fine-cut tobacco. As a result, the tobacco tax per cigarette will be 23.5 cents as compared to the old rate of 20.5 cents per cigarette. Tobacco other than cigarettes and cigars will be thirty-eight cents per gram compared to the old rate of thirty-two cents per gram.

It is a very straightforward amendment. This will be retroactive to March 28, 2014, as I said; to coincide with the date the increase came in to effect. This is just the amendment to allow us to do that tax increase. It is that simple, Mr. Chair, and I will leave it there for any comments and questions.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I am happy to stand and speak to Bill 12, which is a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco.

It is very straightforward in the sense that we are talking about the raising of the cost. It used to be 20.5 cents per cigarette and now we have gone to 23.5 cents.

Sorry, that is for cigarettes. Tobacco has gone up from thirty-two cents to thirty eight cents, and cigars have gone up as well. That in and of itself obviously is something that the government does from time to time, but one of the interesting things that I wanted to talk about was one of the main purposes of this raise, which I would assume is the creation of a smoking cessation program.

I am very happy to see this. It is something that we have called on for some time and the NLMA has called on for some time. In fact, I was at a press conference last year where the NLMA came out and asked for government to come forward with a smoking cessation program. They have a press release this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation.

MR. A. PARSONS: The NLMA has been asking for this for some time. They asked for it last year and they put out a press release this year applauding the government for its commitment.

I applaud government, too. It is something that makes sense. It is sensible; however, I do not think it goes far enough. What I am going to do is spend my time – and I may have more time after – to talk about why I do not think they have gone far enough in the utilization of money realized from this tax raise to going to something that is hopefully going to improve the health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and at the same time lessen the burden on our health care system.

I just have a few things to say and a lot of it is no surprise to everybody in this House of Assembly or most people out there in the Province. Cigarette smoking is the single most preventable cause of premature death. We have one of the highest rates of smoking in Canada. That rate has stayed fairly stable over the last number of years. We really have done very little to work on that. Right now I think it is 23.2 per cent and maybe 23.3 per cent, but we are right up there when it comes to Alberta, when it comes to Quebec, and when it comes to PEI.

One of the big issues I have had is this Province historically has always made a significant amount of money off the taxation of tobacco. People have always said in the past it is a sin tax, you raise the cost on cigarettes, you raise the cost on booze, and those monies go towards other expenditures that this government incurs. That has always happened.

One thing I have always questioned is why could we not take that money and spend that money on something that is actually going to save us money down the road? That is why last year that was a full year before this government came forward with the program.

A full year before this I said we need to spend money on a smoking cessation program. Although I have gone one step further than the NLMA. The NLMA has said let us do low-income individuals. However, it is my belief that we could cover everybody in this Province at a fraction of the cost of what is being taken in. In the long-run we are going to save money if we can stop even two out of ten who try it and fail. We are still going to save money down the road.

Everybody knows when it comes to health care in this Province, our rates of COPD, our rates of heart disease, and our rates of cancer are amongst the highest in the country or amongst the worst in the country if we want to put it that way. This seems to be something that we would try.

I think last year we raised about \$148 million off tobacco tax. With this increase we are now up to about \$165 million. When you look at it you have just raised taxes, you have just raised \$17 million just off this tobacco increase, yet you are only going to spend \$712,000 on a cessation program. Why could you not double that investment, increase the number of people who are covered? Hopefully we have more people who quit smoking, stop smoking, and then we are going to save the cost down the road. We all know the terrible effect that smoking has on people. It is an addiction.

That could bring me into something further where we talk about the substance use strategy that was promised back in 2008, but was never delivered. This falls into that where we have a way of introducing a strategy that is going to keep people from the abuse of substances, and we could talk about nicotine. That is going to save us down the road when it comes to people who get sick and use our health care system.

The former Minister of Health stood here in the House and said smoking in this Province costs \$300 million to \$400 million in health care costs per year. That is a huge, huge amount of money. Depending on the day of the week and depending on the strategy, the Province likes to talk about being leaders in some ways. It is funny how they talk about leaders for certain things, but when you ask them about other things they do not want to be leaders, they want to be at the bottom of the barrel, the end of the pack. Smoking cessation therapy is one of it.

Right now, we, along with New Brunswick, are the only provinces that do not cover some form of smoking cessation. Quebec themselves have actually put out some reports in the last little while showing how their smoking cessation has drastically reduced the number of people smoking. A province that has a high prevalence of smokers and they are reducing that rate because they are making an investment.

That is one of the things, when you talk about the greater cost and when we talk about the greater expenditure of money by this government, it is investment. What do you get on your investment? What is the return on the investment? Obviously, the higher the return the better, but we do not want to make the investment in something that I think the return is going to be huge.

I also believe that education at the youngest levels is probably one of our more effective ways to keep people from starting smoking. If we can get into their heads at a young age, if we can talk to them, if we can explain how bad it is, then that has a better chance of carrying over. Barring that, we have individuals who start smoking for whatever reasons and at whatever age. A lot of people, once they get in, it is an addiction. They need help, they want to stop, and sometimes they just need that help. Smoking cessation therapy is one way in which to do that.

I think the statistics are important here. We have to put this out. We talk about smarter health care; this is one way that we could have smarter health care. I want the people on the other side to realize – because sometimes they get very touchy when we talk about things they should do. I am telling you this is a good move. I am telling you the \$712,000 that you are going to invest in this and the \$17 million that you are going to make on your tax increase is a good thing. I am saying that is good, I applaud you for it; it is a step in the right direction. What I am saying is that you are not going far enough with it. You could do more.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is good, but not good enough.

MR. A. PARSONS: It is good, but not good enough.

This will be a question that comes up and maybe there will be an answer, I do not know: Why wouldn't we try more? Why wouldn't we take extra funds that - this is an extra \$17 million we never had before. That is an extra \$17 million that we were not expecting, did not have, and that we are going to have. Why couldn't you spend a higher percentage of that to help people quit?

We know under the smoking cessation program that is there, people get up to three tries. I would say that the money you invest, there are going to be a number of people we invest in who fail in their attempt. They are going to fail once, they are going to fail twice, and they are probably going to fail a third time. That is part of this, too. It is tough. Anybody who has ever smoked, anybody who has ever had an addiction, it is tough to conquer.

What we are trying to do is help them through this process, but right now we are only dealing with low-income individuals. What about those others who would like to try? That if we do not help them, if we do not give them that incentive, because sometimes it is not even – the monetary part is one thing but it is the psychological aspect that comes with this. We have to help people quit.

If we just get one out of ten people quitting, that is one out of ten people who are not going to be in our hospital suffering from a plethora of health conditions that come from smoking. That is going to cost us – I believe the cost the Leader of the Opposition put out the other day, we are looking at \$1,880 a day in the hospital bed. That is just the cost per day to sit in a hospital, in an acute care bed I think it is. That is just the cost per day.

If we took that money and invested it in this therapy, we could prevent that. I do not think I am saying anything that the members opposite do not realize. I am just wondering why we cannot go that extra step, given that it is extra money they are raising. It is not money they had before. It is not an actual cost per se. I guess it is not new revenue being generated. It is extra revenue being generated from a previous taxation.

We are making \$165 million a year in tobacco tax. We are spending \$300 million to \$400 million a year because of smoking. I think it is a simple trade off.

Cost is a barrier to accessing smoking cessation. We know that. When you look at the cost of living in this Province, it is like most provinces I am sure, that the cost of living is going up. Rent goes up; groceries go up, every other cost, the cost of goods, the cost of services. It is all going

up. You have fewer dollars to spend, therefore when you are making those decisions, even though sometimes it is hard, you realize that the cost they will save by not spending that price on a pack of cigarettes, if they smoke a pack a day, a pack a week, whatever, that money could be saved by helping them make that investment.

We already know cessation therapies have a huge impact on success rates for people trying to quit. Cold turkey just does not always do it. What I am saying here is that we need universal coverage. Universal coverage will help give us a better health care outcome and result in the future.

The stats show that in Canada, tobacco is killing 37,000 people each year. This is obviously a major public health concern. It is so preventable. It is contributing to 85 per cent of all new cases of lung cancer in Canada. It is staggering when you think about it.

One thing I want to talk about – and something that we asked about in Estimates and was uncovered – is that with this, though, there is the \$712,000 that is invested, but there is actually a co-pay component to it as well. I believe it is \$75, but the minister will correct me if I am wrong. If I am wrong, that is fine. I know there is co-pay, and I believe it is \$75.

Any of the advocates will tell you that any co-pay is a disincentive or a barrier to trying to quit smoking. I come back to the original premise. We are raising \$17 million extra new dollars, but we are still getting low-income individuals having to come up with \$75 to avail of this.

You are not going to see those statistics because those are individuals who are not even going to try in many cases. They will not make that attempt because coming up with the co-pay is tough. We have all heard the struggles, members on both sides hear of struggles. It is a very, very difficult thing. We already have all the known barriers to smoking and quitting smoking, and now we are introducing a new barrier to people who are trying to quit. We should be reducing barriers when it comes to getting people to quit.

A lot of other provinces have done these studies. A lot of other provinces have already gone down

this road. They have already been there, they see the success. I am glad that our Province is following suit. I applaud it, as I have said earlier just then. We have asked you to do it. I am glad that we asked. It is a smart move. It is called smarter health care, something we have been advocating for.

Quebec, in their economic review of hospitals, found out that 30 per cent of hospital costs are driven by smokers. When you think of the extraordinary cost of health care and the significant proportion of that which is coming from hospitals, 30 per cent of that is coming from smoking. I would wager that if there was a study done in this Province we would probably find something very similar to that. Therefore, it would seem all the more likely that we should be doing more to combat, really, what is an evil.

When I get another chance to talk, I actually have some numbers here. I will get a chance to bring them up. The cost to actually provide smoking cessation therapy to everybody in this Province is still far, far lower than the revenue being realized just from this tax increase.

Before anybody tires to get up and say: well, you are speaking out against it. Look, tobacco increases, they come, they happen. This is not the first time. I do not even think it is the first time it has happened since we have been here since 2011, but what I am saying is you could cover everybody and you would still have money left over that you did not have last year.

I will have another opportunity to speak to this. I am glad to see the Province doing it. It is the right step, but you can do better.

Thank you very much.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am glad to hear the member opposite is applauding what we are doing; unfortunately, he just voted against it a few minutes ago in the Budget, Mr. Chair.

Just for clarification purposes, this tax increase on tobacco tax is nothing to do about money, Mr. Chair. This is about trying to improve people's health.

A report came out recently, just prior to the Budget coming down and during the time when we were making our decisions, the World Health Organization came out with a report and they talked about what countries in the world are doing to reduce smoking rates. They said out of all of the programs and policies in place the best thing you can do to reduce smoking rates is to increase the tax on cigarettes, and to do a significant increase, and, Mr. Chair, that is exactly why we increased it by three cents and six cents on fine-cut tobacco.

The member mentioned the main purpose to do this was to bring in a smoking cessation program, and that certainly was not the main purpose for doing this. As I said, the main purpose for doing this was to help improve people's health, and to do that, as suggested by the World Health Organization, through increased taxes. As an aside, we also decided to bring in a smoking cessation program. As I said, I am glad to see he supports that, unfortunately he did not vote for it in the Budget vote.

Mr. Chair, he said we should do more in terms of spending. This is a pilot project and there was research done into smoking levels. When you look at the categories, this was a very targeted approach. The research shows us that 40 per cent of smokers are in the low-income threshold category. That is why we selected to do this for low-income earners, because 40 per cent of the smokers are in that range. So, it would be a great place to start as a pilot. As with any pilot, there is a level of analysis that needs to be done, and then evaluation. Then certainly if we can see that the program is effective, our hope that this would be a universal program as well; but we want to start where we know we have the ability to have an impact, and then move from there.

He talks about spending more of the – he is focused on the \$17 million. You also have to realize that \$17 million went into general revenue, and not only did it allow us to bring in the smoking cessation program, but it also allowed us to spend over \$10 million in cancer

drugs, Mr. Chair. That is where a significant portion of the revenues went in this year's Budget in Health was into very much needed cancer care drugs to help with the prevention of cancer and to help with the improvement of lives of those people with cancer. Funding also went into the Medical Transportation Assistance Program to assist people who may have cancer or other issues in terms of travelling to health care centres.

So, I just want to clarify for the member, the main purpose to do the tax was not to bring in a smoking cessation program – we could have brought in a smoking cessation and not increase the tax – but because of the expertise and advice from the World Health Organization, we followed through with what they said. Some would say three cents was not enough; others would tell me it is too much. We find it is the right balance, and it puts us on par with the rest of Canada, and we are now at the average in terms of smoking tax.

Hopefully, that clarifies for the member as to why we did. It is to improve people's health, to improve their health outcomes, and why we targeted in a specific group; and that was for low-income earners, because that is where, through research, it shows that the majority of smokers in this Province are in the low-income range. So we really did want to help them analyze that, evaluate that. Then, hopefully, from there, the results will show that smoking rates did decline, and then we can take it one step further from there. As with any program, you have to start, evaluate, and then improve upon and make changes, if necessary.

So hopefully, that clarifies that for the member.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I am happy to stand and speak to this again and respond to the minister's comments, and certainly I voted against her Budget that put a significant debt on the children and grandchildren of this Province. I just want to put that out here, and I am going to speak a bit

more about this therapy here. There were good things in the Budget. Because do you know what? That is obvious – there were a lot of things that we asked for. I am glad to see it, and we support those initiatives; but it is similar to the Harper and the omnibus, where there is a little bit of good but there is a lot bad. That is again taking a lesson from your cousins.

Again, one of the things that I wanted to talk about – and I am going to put this out there, because I still have not seen it – the minister talked about oh, we took the revenue from this and we invested it not just in this, but we put it to other cancer drugs. I will remind the minister, and this has nothing to do with her department – she would not know this – but we asked for a list of those drugs and we still have not had them provided.

We sought a list. I do not think that list has been provided yet. We did ask for that during – and again, the minister would have been there and I know he provided an undertaking. I know the minister will provide it because he is true to his word and provides it, but the list was not provided yet. I would say at some point if you are going to talk about the drugs that you are paying for, show us what they are. That is a very simple request.

I know that there were a lot of requests during the Estimates of the Health Department, there is a lot of information, so I look forward to getting that.

I would come back to the fact that I am speaking in favour of this. I like the fact that the Province is using money realized from this, but we have to look at some of the other facts as well. We are the only province that did not see, from 2011 to 2012, a decrease in smoking rates. We did not see it. Again, I know that we are going after individuals in the low-income demographic, and that is good, but I think that we could make it a universal coverage and still have significant monies left to go toward other necessary causes. I have no doubt about that.

In fact, going on some estimates – and they may be low or they may be high – you could probably cover it for \$3 million to \$4 million and it would be universal. That still leaves a fair amount of money left from this \$17 million.

Again, the bigger thing is that hopefully, with this investment, you see a decrease in the health care costs. That is the big thing that we need to look at here.

This is a small investment now, but you want to see a large investment when it comes to the health care costs that we are going to save because there are fewer people smoking, fewer people suffering from the conditions that come with it. I think now it is sort of taking the long view to small step now, but it is going to be big results, a big impact down the road. Now, you might not see that right away; it may take some time.

I reiterate – and sometimes the message does not get across – I support this initiative. I called for it last year. I spoke about it in the House two years before I am pretty sure. That is a good thing, but I think we could go that step further. I think we will see that investment have a significant return down the road if we were to apply it universally to people in this Province. Given the fact that we have roughly 800 people a year die in this Province, I think we could do a lot by getting everybody access to smoking cessation therapy.

I just want to put that out there. I may have some more commentary. Undoubtedly, the minister will have some response to this. It is hard for me to sit down because there is so much to say to this. I will sit down now and I will give the minister an opportunity to respond to this.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Chair, I am responding to this bill. First, I would like to speak to something that, if it were in economics terms it would be referred to as the paradox of thrift. In this case, it is a paradox of how we save money by increasing tobacco taxes by saving money through the health care system.

In this situation what we are saying is that if we have smoking cessation programs, then people will not smoke so much. If people do not smoke so much, then we do not get so much revenue.

That means we take a revenue hit; however, if people do not smoke so much, then over the long term they do not get all the smoking illnesses, the chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease, lung disease, all sorts of diseases that come from smoking. This takes a longer time to get the health care benefit.

Mr. Chair, this type of an increase in tobacco tax is – I think, in fairness to the people who are paying the tobacco tax, all of the increase really should be focused on smoking cessation. Otherwise, we are saying to somebody who is addicted – and clearly smoking is an addiction – we are going to charge you a certain amount of extra money in a tax because of your addiction, but we are not going to put it back into fighting your addiction. We are not going to put it back into helping you quit smoking. We are going to put it in other areas. We are going to put it in cancer prevention.

That seems like a real folly to say we are going to jack up the taxes for people who buy tobacco products, and then we are going to invest that money into putting it into cancer treatment, when we really should be putting that money right back into getting people to stop smoking. If people stopped smoking then the cancer rates would reduce, as would all sorts of other rates of illness would reduce the smoking-related illnesses.

How much tax are we going to be charging on a pack of cigarettes when this is over? I think the people need to be really mindful of how much it is. At 23.5 cents for every cigarette, that means the provincial tobacco tax per package of cigarettes is going to be \$4.70. That is roughly half the price of a pack of cigarettes. To that you need to add another seventy-one cents HST. Now the provincial tobacco tax and the HST will be \$5.41 on a pack of cigarettes. Government is going to take this and put it into their general revenues, all the while complaining that health care costs so much.

It would seem to make the most sense that the money that smokers pay in taxes should go toward having them stop smoking. If they were to stop smoking, then tobacco revenues would decline. Also, over the longer term, diseases related to smoking would also decline. Mr.

Chair, there is a real intriguing point, and that was the first paragraph of this tiny bill.

The second point in this very tiny bill imposes the tax retroactively. We went through quite a lengthy debate on whistleblower legislation where the government says we cannot have any sort of retroactive legislation. This bill says, "This Act is considered to have come into force on March 28, 2014."

In fact, this is charging a retroactive tax for more than the past two months. By the time it is implemented, according to the bill, who is going to pay for this? The smokers are not going to pay for it. If the act is considered to have come into force on March 28, 2014, presumably business will have to pay for it. This can easily be seen as an attack on business by this government by introducing a bill that retroactively charges a tax for the past few months when there was no tax in place.

Mr. Chair, who is going to pay the tax on the retroactive part? Why did government argue so vehemently over the past few weeks on the whistleblower legislation – which, even though it is passed today, does not come into effect until July 1 – but the tobacco tax increase is going to be considered to have come into effect on March 28, 2014? It seems to be grossly unfair that businesses will now have to pony up for the money they have not yet collected. It is like a back tax – a retroactive back tax.

Hopefully the minister will explain the retroactivity of the back tax, because otherwise you would think that you would need an amendment. It looks like you should have an amendment to say change it to coming into force at some future date, because that would allow businesses to accommodate the increasing in taxes.

If government was going to consider an amendment, I think most people in the Opposition would probably say, well yes, we do not want you charging a back tax on business. We know that businesses struggle as it is, and this government pretends to be business friendly, although this bill certainly does not seem to say that it is business friendly.

Mr. Chair, there is another issue that I have. Clearly they have issues with their expenses. We know there has been a serious issue, when you run deficits you have a problem with expenses. This government on this bill seems to have a problem with revenue, because they cannot spell it right. The title of the bill misspells revenue.

What it is going on here? Is it An Act To Amend The R-e-v-e-u-n-e Administration Act No. 2? I do not know if we need an amendment, but I am going to move an amendment, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl in any event, to correct the spelling to say Revenue, instead of 'Reveune'.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I understand the Member for St. Barbe has moved an amendment?

Do you have a written copy of the amendment?

MR. J. BENNETT: No, unfortunately I did not notice the spelling error until I started to read the act a little more closely. I could not believe it was misspelled. I do not have a written amendment. I am not sure we need much of a written amendment to correct the spelling to match up with the dictionary spelling.

CHAIR: Okay, the Member for St. Barbe –

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the member pointing out the spelling error. Unfortunately, it has been busy days, and staff sometimes in rushing to get their work – because this work is done by staff, of course, not by politicians here. On behalf of the staff who did the work, I thank the member for pointing out the error. Government would gladly consent to ask staff to correct the spelling there, and ask them that in future make sure they double check before we circulate to Opposition.

Thank you for pointing out the error that staff made on that.

CHAIR: Based on that, the Member for St. Barbe, would you be willing to withdraw your motion?

MR. J. BENNETT: I think it requires an actual amendment, does it not? I certainly would defer it to a constitutional expert, but if we pass bills that are spelled wrong, what can it say about the administration of government?

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Mr. Chair, my understanding is that if there is consent of the House, we can simply have the typographical error fixed. I am offering government's consent. I am seeing the NDP offer their consent. If the House Leader for the Liberal Party is in consent, I see no reason why we cannot fix a typographical error and not have to go to a constitutional expert for an opinion.

CHAIR: Order, please!

This is sort of a new area for me as Chair. We are going to recess the House for a few minutes to consider the amendment that was put forward by the Member for St. Barbe. It might only take us a couple of minutes, but I have to check with the officials.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

I have considered the amendment that the Member for St. Barbe has put forward, and indeed the amendment is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: However, in consultation, I have found out that a spelling or typographical error, Legislative Counsel has the authority to make those corrections without an amendment. So, based on that knowledge, would the Member for St. Barbe like to withdraw the amendment?

MR. J. BENNETT: Yes, Mr. Chair. I am not sure if I need the consent of my seconder or not.

MR. LANE: You have my consent.

MR. J. BENNETT: I have his consent, so yes it is withdrawn.

CHAIR: Okay. Are there any further speakers?

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I certainly appreciate the Member for St. Barbe pointing out that spelling error. I am sure staff will very diligently and quickly correct that.

Now I want to point out his error, Mr. Chair. If he had gone on to read past the title he would have seen that the commencement is, "This Act is considered to have come into force on March 28, 2014."

On Budget day, in the Budget Speech itself, I did announce that the tax would come into effect for consumers that very night. There was a press release and there was also a notification that went out to all retailers. When he suggests that businesses will be on the hook because this bill is retroactive, that is an error, Mr. Chair. That is incorrect.

Businesses would not be on the hook. Consumers have been paying for the increase since 12:01 o'clock midnight on March 28. That is how tax bills work. This is very commonplace and has been past practice. That is how it has been for other tobacco tax increases in the past. So, just to clarify that error on his part.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I am happy to speak to this bill which is obviously a result of a decision in the Budget. The Budget was to increase the taxation on cigarettes and tobacco – well tobacco in the form of cigarettes and loose tobacco. It is an easy form of revenue, there is no doubt. All governments regularly look at something like tobacco or alcohol as well, as places to increase revenue.

I have no problem with that, except the increasing of revenue is very often, in the case of tobacco, on the back of lower-income people among whom smoking rates are higher than people with higher incomes; which is a sign we really do need more programs to help people with the addiction of smoking, because smoking is a serious addiction. It is not easy for people to get over it.

I do note that in our Budget this year, in the Budget of government, they did respond to requests that have been made for a number of years actually, by both the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Newfoundland and Labrador Lung Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association, and the Association of Registered Nurses, all of whom, over the years, have been asking government to cover help for low-income people with regard to smoking cessation.

In the Budget, we do have supports for health and wellness in Budget 2014. One of those is \$712,000 to subsidize smoking cessation products for people living on low incomes. That is good that there is help there for smoking cessation products, but I think we need more than just products to help people with smoking. I think we also need programs that are part of preventative health. This is something we are weak on in the Province, and that is with regard to preventative health programs, and a smoking cessation program is that.

In the Province at the moment – this was a figure from 2013 – we still have 87,000 smokers over the age of fifteen. That means a percentage of the population over age fifteen, of that percentage, 20 per cent still smoke. I would point out, we do not have statistics on it, but unfortunately I am afraid smoking starts even younger than age fifteen. I do not know what the percentage is among children, but I think we really do need to be looking at smoking cessation programs and further education programs with regard to smoking. Especially in the school system, because we still have smoking going on among younger people at a higher degree than among adults, and we need to be looking at that.

In the Province, too – this is something that has an economic side to it – the more we get people to stop smoking the more we are cutting back on health care costs. Because, again, from 2013 health care costs in this Province, acute care hospitalizations between 2011 and 2012 attributable to smoking; there were 4,702 hospitalizations attributable to smoking in this Province in 2011 to 2012.

The estimated health care cost attributable to tobacco use in 2006 – which is the latest figure I have – was \$95 million. Hospitalizations cost \$68 million; prescription medicines \$22 million; family physician visits \$3 million; ambulance costs \$2 million. All part of costs attributable to illnesses, diseases, and hospitalizations directly related to smoking.

We know that tobacco use has been linked to virtually every major cause of death: heart disease, many types of cancers, lung diseases, and even Type 2 diabetes. Some of these are links that we do not even think about. The link with diabetes has been, over the last couple of years, a new one for me to know about. Seventeen per cent of deaths in this Province are related to tobacco use. We had an estimated 4,657 deaths in 2012; therefore, 792 deaths due to tobacco use. This is the reality that we are dealing with.

So while I am really glad to see government putting money into helping low-income people with regard to the products that help with smoking cessation, we really need a lot more effort, as I said earlier, with regard to programs. We need programs in our community clinics. We need programs in schools with regard to education around smoking. We need programs within the health care system with regard to cessation.

Again, I see money being put into something here by government, but I do not see a plan to deal with the issue. So, money is being put in to help with the buying of products that will help with smoking cessation, but nothing in there to help with the program where the person is being supported by other people and supported within the health care system as they try to stop smoking.

The benefits of quitting smoking are documented. One year after quitting, the risk of heart attack is cut in half. Now, that is an amazing statistic. One year after quitting, cut in half. Fifteen years after quitting, the risk of heart attack is the same as a non-smoker. So, stop smoking in your forties, because today many people are living into their eighties and nineties. If you can get somebody to stop smoking in their thirties or in their forties, they are going to live the same length of life or have the chance of living the same length of life as a non-smoker. This is worth going after. Ten years after quitting, the risk of dying from lung cancer is cut in half.

We have so many reasons for really helping people to stop smoking. As I said, there is more to that than just the use of different products that help with that. We also need to have programs to help with that.

I think it is important to know and to think about how serious this addiction is in terms of being an addiction in order to help us realize how important it is to have the programs. We know that in 1998 the US Surgeon General concluded that nicotine is similar to the addiction to heroin or cocaine. These are heavy, addictive drugs and nicotine is similar in terms of its power as an addiction to heroin or cocaine. Less than 50 per cent of smokers are able to quit cold turkey. Many of us know smokers, many of us have had smokers in our families and we know that there are very few who can do it.

I am happy to say that my mother, who is now dead – she died when she was eighty-eight – in her forties, did stop cold turkey. She had a will of iron and she did it. That is not true for a lot of people, so we really do need to have sympathy for people who have become addicted. When you think about the fact that many of the people who are addicted maybe started smoking when they were twelve, thirteen, or fourteen years old, it is really hard for them to be able to give it up. We really have to be able to work with them.

Also, smoking cessation therapies – that is not just the use of prescription drugs, but there are so many different kinds of therapies that do not even use drugs that the smoking cessation therapy can double or triple the likelihood of quitting.

We will have much healthier people if we can help people quit and we will have savings to our health care system if we help people quit. I really encourage government to look at not just putting extra tax on cigarettes and tobacco because that is not going to stop smoking – that has been proven that it is not going to stop smoking – and not just to put money into supporting people in buying products that will help them, but also put programs into our health care system and encourage our health care system to develop programs so that people will really get the help to stop smoking. It will be an economic benefit and it will be a benefit to our society.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to have a few minutes on this debate this afternoon. A couple of matters that have come up that members have asked for some information on, I will use my time on this at this point in time to try and provide some of that information.

The Member for Burgeo – La Poile has asked about new drugs that were announced in the Budget this year. I can tell him that the process on those is proceeding well. There is a process in place where the consideration of drugs, first of all, goes through one of the three expert review committees. Once that takes place, there is also a process whereby there is price negotiation through the product listing agreements that takes place as well, so that a lower price can be achieved and best value can be achieved for the people of the Province. It goes through that process.

It has been a streamlined process from what it used to be. It takes a much shorter time, so we are hoping that in the not-too-distant future we can start announcing those drugs that are now added to the formulary. I just wanted to let him know; I know he asked about that. He has asked for specific information and until those

processes are completed, we are not able to provide him with that specific information.

Mr. Chair, as for the co-pay part of the questions here, I would just like to point out that the co-pay for a person to enter into a three-month process, you are right; there will be a \$75 fee. It can be broken down into – depending how the prescription occurs and a person picks up their prescriptions, but they will be required to pay \$25 per one month prescription for a three-month period. That is \$6.25 a week, Mr. Chair.

One of the advantages of a co-pay approach is that it also encourages people to take what they are doing seriously. So, instead of just frivolous picking up the phone, order your products and move on, you buy into the seriousness of making an effort to cease smoking and to quit smoking. We have designed it so that it is shared responsibility so that people who intend to and want to make an effort to quit smoking, it will help ensure that that co-pay is part of their commitment into ensuring that they are successful.

As for the price and taxation on tobacco, we know the Canadian Medical Association indicated that by raising the price by 10 per cent that they believe the result of that is decreasing smoking by 5 per cent. They have indicated that by increasing the price, there is a correlation to lowering the frequency of smoking and those who smoke. The World Health Association had said that the most effective approach to spreading the control of tobacco is through policies to directly reduce demand. They went on to say that the elevation of prices is the best option. The World Health Association has also said by increasing the price and cost of tobacco products, it is the best way to reduce the use of smoking.

Mr. Chair, our program will roll out this fall. It is a first-time program for this Province. There are two drugs that will be made available. Champix and Zyban will be available for individuals aged eighteen years old and older, who smoke and meet the eligibility requirements of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program.

Mr. Chair, we are working with stakeholders right now to finalize the details of how the

program will exist and how the program will roll out. I would like to point out as well that part of this roll out of the program will include the use of other stakeholders.

We currently fund the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco \$210,000 a year. We also provide annual funding to the Newfoundland and Labrador Lung Association's provincial Smokers' Helpline at \$225,000 a year. It is interesting to point out that last year the helpline received 6,200 calls from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and 1,024 of those calls were first-time callers. We also know, through the Smokers' Helpline, that 600 health professionals currently refer individuals to the Smokers' Helpline.

Part of the roll out of this cessation program is also to provide that information. People who want to participate, members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program who want to participate in the program as well, we will be providing them with source information for them to find the supports through the Smokers' Helpline and encourage them to utilize that as well as a source.

This program and this project we are rolling out, Mr. Chair, there are several different models in Canada with a variety of nuances to them and details to them. We fully intend to review the program as it rolls out and how it occurs, review the uptake, success and so on, and then quite willing to make changes and improvements to it as time goes on. We should be always willing to do that. We should always be willing to look at how programs are operating and functioning and to find, how can we improve them to make them better?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Since we are debating Bill 12 in the House today, I really wanted to get on my feet for just a couple of minutes and raise an issue that I first became aware of when I was campaigning last

spring. Today we are discussing An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2 where we are going to see an increased tax on cigarettes and tobacco.

I want to talk for a couple of minutes about something that happened with Budget 2013 that really, really hurt and badly hurt a number of businesses in my district, Mr. Chair. There are some paramount things that we remember about Budget 2013, the 1,200 public servants who were laid off. There was a lot of dialogue generated around that and a number of other things regarding the Budget.

There was a policy in place where businesses that lived within one hour of the Quebec border, because the taxes in Quebec were cheaper, to give these businesses a competitive edge, Mr. Chair, these businesses would get a rebate. I know government's rationale was that it cost them \$3.4 million in revenue, but I am wondering was there – I believe it was a case once again where there was no analysis done. There was no follow-up. Quite possibly, Mr. Chair, it might have been revenue neutral had there been some study done into that.

Businesses in remote areas do not get many breaks, I can tell you that. They pay very high commercial rates. One of these businesses that was hurt very badly from the cancellation of the rebate, Mr. Chair, he actually was a guy who wanted to do some experimenting with wind energy because he lived in a prime location for that, but because of Bill 61 that was passed, giving the monopoly on energy in the Province to Nalcor, he was forbidden to do that.

Mr. Chair, the cancellation of the rebate hurt the sales of those businesses overnight. Because when people would drop in for a pack of cigarettes they were also gassing up, they were getting their groceries. There were gas sales, grocery sales. There were jobs that were impacted because of this. With that, Mr. Chair, there are always a number of other things that you run in and get. We often joke and talk about Costco is the place where you pay \$200 for a dozen eggs, because you drop in for a dozen eggs but while you are there you pick up a number of other things, too.

It is very concerning in an area where you have small businesses that are working very hard to try and maintain their viability and sustain themselves, to have government turn around and cancel that rebate. There were situations, Mr. Chair, where people from Quebec were actually crossing the border and they were coming into my district, many of them, they were buying their cigarettes there and they were buying other things while they were there.

So, once again, like something I am experiencing every weekend when I see people from Quebec on the flight going in and out of Muskrat Falls, while my own people cannot get work there, we see that Quebec was given an edge here again. I just wanted to get up and speak for a couple of minutes because I still hear it.

Just recently when I was the district one of the businesses raised the issue with me of how the cancellation of this rebate has really had a detrimental effect on their small business. That is very concerning, Mr. Chair, when government decides they are going to cancel something like that without any analysis and without any follow-up.

Thank you.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I rise in my place on behalf of the people of St. John's East. I wanted to give a bit of a personal experience here when you are talking about the monies here in the Budget to increase the price of tobacco. I spoke about this last year. It was a little bit of a different topic considering I have a lifetime experience with it, considering that I am a smoker. I am still trying to kick the habit and it is hard, very hard. I know we are hearing an awful lot here today about smoking cessation. Mr. Chair, sometimes I wonder about even starting it at all and about the monies that are being put in on that end of it, in other words upfront.

I had occasion, I guess about two weeks ago now, to attend a graduation of sorts for a great program. It is called the DARE program, which

is the Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program over at Mary Queen of Peace. I have to congratulate over 100 young students from Grade 7, graduating from Mary Queen of Peace this year, who took that program. It is a ten-week program, and Constable Nixon was a great instructor for that program over there. I think the Minister of Health also knows him from his previous life. The kids received some great instruction as regards why they should be staying away from drugs in the first place. It was simply a great program.

It was, like I said, a ten-week program. This program has been ongoing now for – well, I guess in the context of educational programs, not very long in the history of time. In 1983 it was started up by Daryl Gates who was the Chief of Police, I think it was in Los Angeles, a fairly famous name in some circles. When it comes to the program being in this Province, I do not think it has been around very long at all. It is still a young program.

I am not quite sure exactly how much government itself would actually invest into this particular program but the reason why I bring it up is because I would like to see this on the school curriculum everywhere in this Province and probably encompassing more grades than just Grade 7. Even though it is a ten-week instructional program, I thought it was very neat. I thought I would bring it up on that context, that if we also had the initiatives on the front end for government to be funding rather than just the effects of smoking afterwards. It seems like we put more emphasis on the after-effects of being hooked, rather than putting more money upfront for not starting smoking at all.

I wanted to bring up that point. It is only a very small point, but somebody had sent me the short, quick note on this when I was talking. They said it is not just about stopping; it should be more about not starting.

I would like to hear from the government on that to see if they have any money in the Budget particularly, or any money in this particular initiative as well, geared around not starting smoking. It is a habit that gets you. I am fifty-one years old here now. I have been smoking pretty much since I was fourteen or fifteen years old. I quit once or twice and always ended up

back on them. You do get hooked and it is a very hard thing to quit, but that is not to say that I am not stopping to try to quit or anything, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to bring that up to government if they have any more funding initiatives geared around the money they are going to be collecting around this piece of legislation that would be geared towards not starting the habit in the first place.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The hon. member opposite addresses a significant, very important program administered through certain schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, the DARE program, Drug Abuse Resistance Education program. It is very good program for young students. It is very effective, very well received by students who have participated in it as well.

Also, I just want to point out to him, because I did mention earlier that we also fund the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco, just over \$200,000. We also have annual funding for the Newfoundland and Labrador Lung Association's provincial Smokers' Helpline at \$225,000, so that was a \$435,000 annual expenditure in those two particular line areas. Now, with the adding of \$712,000 this year for the smoking cessation program, that brings it up to over \$1.1 million in smoking.

We also have school-based anti-tobacco programs through Healthy Students Healthy Schools program. We also have funding through the provincial wellness fund community program that supports living smoke free. So there are a number of other programs that are available, not just for people who have started smoking and now have a desire to stop smoking but also to prevent it in the first place.

As well, there are a number of things that are done – as I was sitting here listening to the debate this afternoon – through the Province and through legislation and policy development that

also helps to curb smoking, such as how far you must be from buildings and health facilities before you can smoke. It makes it less convenient for people to smoke.

Just to remind members in the House as well, that we make significant investments through healthy communities, healthy aging, and those types of programs, which all in many ways support not smoking, living a healthy lifestyle, which includes many facets of our life including diet, exercise, so on and so forth.

I just want to remind the members opposite of those as well. The member opposite is correct that once a person begins to smoke, starts smoking, it can be very challenging to stop smoking. There is great value in preventing a person or encouraging people not to smoke in the first place.

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2". (Bill 12)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No.2.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, the long title carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 12.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report the resolution and Bill 12.

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

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: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Ways and Means reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative session convened as follows: "That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative session convened as follows: "That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce Bill 12, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce Bill 12, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 12 and that the said bill be now read a first time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2", carried. (Bill 12)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 12)

On motion, Bill 12 read a first time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 12, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 12)

On motion, Bill 12 read a second time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 12, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 12 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 12)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 12)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With the consent of my colleagues across the way, we will take a short recess until about 6:15 p.m., about a forty-five minute recess.

MR. SPEAKER: This House now stands recessed.