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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Today, I am pleased to welcome to the Speaker's gallery Mr. Steve Crocker, who ran in the Trinity-Bay de Verde election and was the successful candidate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I am also very pleased to welcome to the public gallery today, no stranger to this House of Assembly floor, the MP for Labrador, Ms Yvonne Jones.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I am willing to bet it is the only time she ever sat in this House of Assembly without having some words.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of St. Barbe; the Member for the District of Placentia – St. Mary's; the Member for the District of Bonavista North; the Member for the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair; the District of Kilbride; and from the District of Torngat Mountains.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

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

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Douglas and Alice House of Bellburns on their seventy-fifth wedding anniversary. This special occasion, that is so rare for people to have the opportunity to enjoy, was celebrated on September 15 with family and friends.

Douglas, born in Bellburns, met Alice, born in Daniel's Harbour, at an early age. They married and started their family. They raised nine children, enjoy twenty-five grandchildren, a large number of great-grandchildren, and even some great-great-grandchildren.

Douglas was the provider. He fished, logged, and worked as a public employee with the

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Alice never worked outside the home.

They have been blessed to spend so much of their entire married life in the community of Bellburns, and are very much part of the community history. They have been active in the community and with the church. They continue to enjoy good health, and are still living in their own home.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Douglas and Alice House on their seventy-fifth wedding anniversary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Placentia – St. Mary's.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Association Award of Excellence recognizes members of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Association who have exhibited outstanding qualities, which may include those that are above and beyond the call of duty.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to congratulate Sergeant Tim Hogan, a native of Dunville, Placentia who has been selected as this year's recipient of the RNCA Award of Excellence in the category of the leadership award. This award is presented to an officer who distinguishes herself or himself by superior accomplishments or continuing long-term involvement using leadership skills that encompass problem solving, planning, organization, communication, serving on committees that review employees concerns and development, and being a positive role model with the support and assistance to officers.

Sergeant Tim Hogan is a twenty-eight year veteran of the RNC, having served in the units of major crimes, drug enforcement, and property crimes, child and sexual abuse. He is the son of Mary and William Hogan, a former Mayor of Dunville, Placentia, a former MHA for

Placentia, and himself a former member of the RNC.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Sergeant Tim Hogan on winning this prestigious award.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud to rise today to recognize the monumental achievement of a group of volunteers in my district. On September 20, I had the honour to attend the fortieth anniversary of the Centreville-Wareham-Trinity Indian Bay Recreation Committee.

Long before three of the four towns amalgamated, these groups united their forces to tackle regional goals in recreation and sport. The current complement of members on the committee is nearly twenty, and attendance to meetings and events is very high and the agenda very active. The committee is a shining example for others around the Province, and they have been recognized over the years for their valiant efforts for the healthy recreational agenda they have been providing to the communities.

There are four individuals who have been involved from the committee's inception and have participated actively for the entire forty years. Winston Button, Gordon Hunt, Wilfred Wiseman, and Chairman Roland Button should be applauded for their long-standing commitment. Most of these members were also members of the predecessor groups and their involvement dates back nearly forty-three consecutive years.

I ask all hon. members to join in a unified gesture of appreciation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the oldest resident of Labrador, Ms Mary Williams, who recently turned 101. Known to all as Aunt Mary, Ms Williams resettled from Flat Waters to Cartwright during a resettlement program. She married, raised two children, and had four grandchildren.

One of her children was Marguerite Dyson, who was murdered in a boarding house in St. John's in 1996. In Marguerite's memory the St. John's Women's Centre developed Marguerite's Place, a supportive housing complex for women in need.

In spite of the harsh environment, living off the land is what Aunt Mary knew best. From cooking Arctic Char on the rocks to running a dogsled team, Aunt Mary is a woman who has embraced the Labrador life. Still, Mary speaks of Flat Waters fondly and even remarked when I visited her recently, jokingly she wanted to borrow my vehicle to make the trip back. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we consider more than one place home.

Aunt Mary is a generous spirit with a sharing nature and an open heart. I ask all hon. members to join me in wishing Aunt Mary a happy 101st birthday.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for the District of Kilbride.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to commend the 2013-2014 graduating class of St. Kevin's High School in the Goulds. At this year's graduation ceremonies, eighty-five students received

graduating certificates. Twenty-four of these graduated with honours and thirty-nine received one or more scholarships, awards, or prizes.

One student, Raylene Mackey, one of our new Pages in this House, received eleven awards and scholarships.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: The valedictorian Jennifer Careen walked off with five awards, including the Governor General's Medal for Excellence. A total of twenty-five Memorial scholarships were presented to twenty students. These scholarships were donated mostly by families and the Goulds Lions Club to honour past members. Most of the other awards and scholarships were donated by local business, community groups, and organizations.

The majority of these students are already attending post-secondary institutions. Some other have plans to continue their education in the near future. Many of these students are working part-time helping to finance their education.

These students are a fair representation of the quality of the high school students we are graduating from our schools in this Province. They are well-grounded young men and women.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the graduating classes at St. Kevin's High School.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize, also, the thirty-ninth Annual Labrador Creative Arts Festival, which took place this week in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The Labrador Creative Arts Festival is Canada's longest running children's festival, an accomplishment, as I said earlier, worth recognizing in this House.

The drama teacher, Tim Borlase can up with the idea for the festival back in 1974. Borlase and fellow teacher Noreen Heighton went to work to realize that the festival's vision – to foster creative opportunities that bring children together and celebrate their heritage. President and festival co-ordinator Fiona Andersen continues to bring the festival to the spot light.

Since the first festival year in 1975, almost 500 original plays have been written and performed. Over 15,000 children have been involved in these productions and roughly 50,000 children have been exposed to the performing arts as a result of this festival. Over 500 visiting artists from Canada, the US, and Europe have participated.

Mr. Speaker, children's imaginations are boundless. When adults work together to provide opportunities for the children to express their creativity, as the Labrador Creative Arts Festival has done for almost forty years now, it is to be commended.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before we go to statements by ministers, there are five people in the public gallery I would like to recognize: Marden Verge, Sharon Verge, Marion Gillespie, Marie Bennett, and Howard Bennett. They all hale from a small town, Beachside, out near Springdale. To all of them, I am known as their baby brother.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the significant investments this government has made over the last number of

years clearly demonstrate our commitment to ensuring quality infrastructure in communities across Newfoundland and Labrador.

This commitment was evident when we introduced the new cost-share ratios in 2008. Based on population, the revised formula made it easier for communities to afford new infrastructure or significant infrastructure improvements. It means that towns with populations less than 3,000 only pay 10 per cent towards their approved infrastructure projects with the Province covering the remaining 90 per cent. Towns with populations greater than 3,000 but less than 7,000 pay 20 per cent with government paying the other 80 per cent. For towns with populations exceeding 7,000, the Province pays 70 per cent and the town only 30 per cent. This new ratio has been well received by municipal leaders throughout the Province and it allows all municipalities to invest in infrastructure which benefits the residents of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, since the ratio was implemented, the provincial government has approved in excess of \$820 million in municipal capital works projects, resulting in improved municipal infrastructure throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. When federal and municipal contributions are included, the total investment is in excess of \$1.25 billion.

Just this year, the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs committed to a \$200 million three-year capital works program for new municipal infrastructure projects.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that the funding allocated be shared equitably between both large and small municipalities. Of the \$200 million program, the largest seven municipalities received \$100 million. This recognized the major infrastructure pressures that these municipalities were facing.

In addition, the new Building Canada Fund will provide approximately \$349 million in federal funding to the Province over the next ten years. When combined with provincial and municipal funding, the total investment in provincial and municipal infrastructure is expected to be between \$800 million and \$1 billion. This

funding is over and above the existing provincial capital works programs.

We recognize there is an increased demand for infrastructure throughout the Province, from both large and small municipalities, and we have been making progress in addressing their infrastructure needs through our municipal capital works programs, with key priority areas including improving drinking water and waste water systems and recreational infrastructure.

We will continue to work with communities to assist them with their infrastructure projects and these investments highlight our commitment to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of this statement. Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills for all of the work he did through the years, especially in the Bay of Islands area, and the current minister for treating the towns with respect and sitting down and explaining the municipal infrastructure program. Mr. Speaker, in between, there were two there who did not treat people with respect.

It is great to spend the money; it is great for the infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that many towns appreciate the infrastructure, but they need funding to operate. It is one thing to build the infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, but you need the funding to ensure that the infrastructure will operate. That is why I encourage the government for this municipal fiscal framework that could be done this year.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I see the two things that the minister mentioned there. One is the federal waste water, the policy that is coming in from the federal government. The municipalities are looking for answers. This is going to cost the Province, the municipalities, \$500 million, and we are looking to the provincial government for

answers to help with this funding – and the federal government, I say to the minister. Also, I heard the boil orders, Mr. Speaker. I know it is a hard issue, but we all have to work on the boil orders. There are over 100 in the Province now. We all need to work together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MURPHY: I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. It does little good to help municipalities build infrastructure if you do not provide a fair share of operating funds to achieve.

The loss of federal revenue from the cuts made to the Building Canada Fund, just so that the federal Conservatives could balance the budget, along with a drop in our per-capita share because of a lower population does not help municipalities. These municipalities are owed money by the Province, and they are owed that commitment. Clean water and infrastructure is a right, Mr. Speaker; it should not be an ask.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and marked the launch of the provincial government's fifth annual Purple Ribbon Campaign to raise awareness of violence against women. Today, I rise to pay tribute to the Aboriginal women in Newfoundland and Labrador who take an active role in violence prevention and in promoting other issues of concern within their communities.

I recently had the opportunity to participate in the fourth National Aboriginal Women's Summit at Membertou First Nation in Nova

Scotia where I was joined by colleague, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and representatives of Aboriginal governments and organizations.

This event brought together delegates from provincial and territorial governments, National Aboriginal Organizations, and various community leaders to discuss challenges facing Aboriginal women and communities and begin the preparation of a Socio-Economic Action Plan for Aboriginal women. This plan will be presented to the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group of provincial and territorial ministers and leaders of the five National Aboriginal Organizations this spring before being presented to Premiers and National Aboriginal Organization leaders in July.

I also recently participated in the provincial Aboriginal Women's Conference in Happy Valley-Goose Bay where I heard, first-hand, about the issues Aboriginal women face inside their communities. I was pleased to also hear of many successes provincial Aboriginal women's organizations have been having in addressing Aboriginal women's issues right here at home. As a government, we have made investments to help address serious issues such as violence and suicide prevention and it was encouraging to hear directly from conference participants that these investments are indeed having an impact.

Since 2005, the provincial government has invested over \$1.5 million to support 102 violence prevention projects sponsored by Aboriginal governments and organizations throughout the Province through the Aboriginal Women's Violence Prevention Grants Program. Earlier this month, \$200,000 was awarded for ten new projects which support the development of culturally-appropriate approaches to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal women and children in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We continue to support Aboriginal women in addressing violence and other issues that face their communities, and to support the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. We also recognize the importance of learning from their experiences as we seek to develop and refine

policies and initiatives that impact their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all hon. members to join me in congratulating Aboriginal women for continuing to show leadership and for the great work that they do within their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Violence against women is a global pandemic. While factors like ethnicity, income, and geography vary the experiences of women, violence against women transcends geographic boundaries. This weekend, I will take part in a Take Back the Night march in my district again where women and girls will march together to raise awareness about sexual assault and the fear that sexual assault instills in women and girls to walk alone.

Mr. Speaker, numerous times in this House my colleague, the Member for Torngat Mountains, has questioned government on the provision of justice in Aboriginal communities. It is nothing short of shameful that victims of violence are literally living next door to their abusers while the docket list grows from lack of resources in the justice system.

Government's approach to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal women and girls has been piecemeal. In my member's statement just moments ago, I spoke of Marguerite Dyson, an Inuit woman from my district who was murdered in a boarding house here in 1996.

Mr. Speaker, all members of this House supported a private member's motion earlier this year urging the federal government to call a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women. I would have liked to have heard more from the minister on what his government has actually done to lobby the federal government on calling an inquiry since that motion was passed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Aboriginal women have systemically been the target of violence for years. The RCMP has identified 1,200 murdered and missing Aboriginal women. It is time that government stop and listen to Aboriginal women. Although they have not created the problem, we must follow their leadership in providing solutions. They are experts in their experience, and together we must work on addressing the issues of violence against Aboriginal women and children.

I urge this House once again to push the federal government to call for an immediate national inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women, and I thank my Aboriginal sisters for the incredible work they do and the leadership they show.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to present the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's first Regulatory Reform Annual Report. Since this initiative began in 2005, regulatory reform has been a success story for this government.

Our government is responsible for providing the regulatory framework for government departments and agencies to develop policies, programs and procedures. The purpose of the Regulatory Reform Initiative is to improve the regulatory environment for individuals, businesses and communities when accessing services or complying with government requirements.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to tell you that our Regulatory Reform Initiative continues to lead the way in our country when it comes to improving the quality of regulation. Our Regulatory Reform Accountability framework, announced in 2012, was the first of its kind in Canada. This framework defines the expectations of Regulatory Reform, the roles and responsibilities of individual departments and agencies, and outlines the oversight activities for the initiative.

This past year, we have not only met our standing commitment of zero growth in the number of regulatory requirements, but we have also exceeded this commitment with a further decrease in excess of 1,300 requirements. Regulatory reform efforts have also helped to modernize legislation such as the Adoption Act, 2013, streamline multiple wage subsidy programs into a single program and application, and enhance the public's access to services, such as being able to request birth, marriage and death certificates online. Mr. Speaker, this is just a small sample of what this initiative has achieved in the last year.

Mr. Speaker, we are a leader in this country when it comes to regulatory reform and I am proud of the tremendous amount of work that has been completed by those responsible for this important initiative. I encourage all members of this hon. House to visit Service NL's Web site and review the 2013-2014 Regulatory Reform Annual Report, which outlines many more significant achievements.

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. Businesses and consumers alike are both affected by red tape. Government rules, permits, and paperwork are involved in everything from renovating a home to applying for a student loan. This initiative is very important. We welcome anything that makes it easier to do business with government.

However, before government toots its own horn, some facts need to be corrected. This government does not lead the country when it comes to regulatory reform.

Historically, the government has aligned itself with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business when dealing with red tape reduction, although curiously they are not mentioned in the minister's statement. Why could that be, I wonder?

Well, perhaps it could be because the CFIB, which did work closely with government in 2005, just released a report card. In that report card the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador ranked seventh. The government's ranking has been steadily decreasing in recent years since government's office of regulatory reform decreased staff. Government scored a B last year on the report card and C⁺ this year.

According to the report card, which government used to proudly proclaim in press releases when it scored well, one problem with the regulatory reform accountability framework is that information is available but information is difficult for the public to access.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: 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 thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we run into constituents all the time who run into heavy government overregulation; it happens all the time. Businesses are tied down with multiple reporting of revenue to taxes payable and spend lots of time away from their daily business routines is just one example. Another, they should be looking for regulatory reform for workers' compensation. People's lives are hanging for time lost in the review process.

So, not only do we need a change in regulation, Mr. Speaker, I think this government needs to

have a change, in some cases, to some of the present legislation.

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, in September this government accepted all the pre-existing environmental liabilities at the Come By Chance Refinery. They did this without disclosing the full financial extent of these liabilities. We went looking for the information, but we have been blocked by Bill 29.

I ask the Premier: Why are you hiding the financial liabilities that the people of the Province are responsible for, that we accepted, behind Bill 29?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, Bill 29 has nothing to do with this issue whatsoever. We are dealing with the company right now. We are going through an environmental assessment process that they need to go through themselves to understand exactly what is happening on that site.

We have jobs that we have protected in that area, Mr. Speaker. It is in the best interests of the Province. We understand what is going on here. The decisions have been made in the best interests of the people of the Province. We are going through that process of identifying exactly what those liabilities are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If it is not Bill 29 which I have right here, this is what came back. I say to the minister –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: No, they can have this. I am not too sure what they were citing. It was either section 18, section 20, section 27, or section 24, I say to the minister. They were the reasons given why we could not get this information.

We asked very clearly about what environmental monitoring the Province did over the last five years to know the extent of these liabilities. What we got back was the redacted information citing Cabinet confidences.

I ask the Premier: Why are you refusing to let the people of the Province know the financial liabilities that we are now responsible for?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, part of the terms and conditions of the sale of the refinery, the proponent that is taking over the refinery has taken on the responsibility, as part of the terms and conditions, to have a look and assess exactly what is on site and what is happening there. We expect that assessment to happen in short order.

We are going through that process. We do not have a definitive answer today, Mr. Speaker. It is the responsibility right now of the company to make sure they do that work and get that information back to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the information we have received from government indicates that government costs at the refinery could be as high as \$269 million. This is on top of the \$265 million in environmental liabilities from this government's botched Abitibi expropriation.

I ask the Premier: Will you confirm that the people of the Province are now responsible for up to \$269 million in environmental liabilities at Come By Chance?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to come to an exact number, exactly what the liability is going to be. We are going through the process to identify exactly what that number will be. As soon as we have that information, we will let the people of the Province know.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: As soon as and very soon; can the minister let this House know and let the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know when this will be completed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we have no problem making that information public at the right time.

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is a.k.a. for I guess I do not know.

Mr. Speaker, in government's press release from September 5, 2014, they said the refinery, "The site undergoes regular environmental monitoring by the Provincial Government." However, government documents say that many of the oil storage tanks onsite have not been inspected since they were installed forty years ago.

I ask the Premier: How can you claim you are doing regular monitoring when many of the tanks have not been inspected for over forty years?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, the work that is being done around the refinery right now, the work to make sure that sale goes through, is important work to the people of the Province. There has been a lot of work done in the last number of years in making sure that site is, again, acceptable in terms of the environment for the people who live in that area. There has been monitoring ongoing for a number of years, Mr. Speaker.

There is a ten-year plan that has been put in place for the proponent that is taking over that refinery. They have a number of months now to do that assessment, to make sure we understand fully exactly what the liabilities are, and that is where we are right now with that refinery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Through our work with the All-Party Committee on Shrimp Allocations, we all agree that if LIFO continues as a policy next year, it will be a devastating year for our shrimp fishery.

I ask the Premier: In your recent conversations with the Prime Minister, did you discuss the LIFO issue?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the member opposite I did not. That was not the topic of conversation. There was a single topic of discussion with my most recent

conversation with the Prime Minister, and it did not include LIFO.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When the all-party committee met with the federal minister back in July of this year, she indicated that some new research would be available this year. I believe it was October she mentioned this could be available.

I ask the Premier: Has the federal government shared this research with you, and what is the current status of the shrimp stocks?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I met with the federal minister back in September in Prince Edward Island, and I believe the very first word I said to her, before I said hello, was LIFO. We had a conversation at that particular time. LIFO is an absolute policy of the federal government that we have been against since 2010. It is a policy that, as a government, we disagree with. It is a policy that will have devastating impacts on the shrimp fishery on the inshore of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is something that we are having discussions with and will continue to hammer away at with the federal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a critical issue. Of course, having this information available to the people of this Province is critically important.

I ask the minister one more time: Do you have the information from the October surveys and

monitoring that were anticipated in October of this year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, again I will say to the hon. member that the LIFO policy, as it is right now with regard to the federal government, is a policy that we have been advocating against since 2010, every opportunity that I get to speak with the federal minister and other federal ministers. It is a policy that we are fundamentally against.

We will advocate on behalf of the shrimp fishers of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is something, Mr. Speaker, that we are not going to bend over on and take from the federal government. It is something that we are fundamentally against.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Tourism in this House yesterday said he would check with the Minister of Justice to see if contracts are available for Erin Breen and Jerome Kennedy. If they were, he said he would table them.

I ask the minister: Will you table those contracts today?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, what I said, or intended to say if I did not say it, is that I would endeavour to see if their contracts were available and if, in fact, we could table them. I have checked that and there are contracts available.

My colleague asking the question would be well aware that those contracts are protected by

client-solicitor privilege. However, I can table a template of a contract that would resemble that contract here in this House. The contract does not involve government, Mr. Speaker. The contract exists between the solicitor in question and the clients they represent.

The hon. member there and the Member for St. Barbe, who are both solicitors, would be well aware of the boundaries we work within there. I can also say to the member that included in that contract would be a standard rate of \$250 an hour that the solicitors are being paid.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I note that the rate is much higher than the legal aid rate, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Tourism said, “I could probably provide a list of hundreds of instances where the Department of Justice... reaches outside into the community... It happens almost on a daily basis...”.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Will you table in this House this list so we can see the hundreds of instances happening on a daily basis?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: No, I will not, Mr. Speaker, but if he asks questions on specific cases, I would be glad to answer it.

The tobacco case that is before the government right now is a case in point, where there are outside lawyers representing government and there are many others. If the hon. member wants to ask specific questions, I will entertain that.

My answer was used to illustrate the point that Mr. Kennedy and Ms Breen are not an anomaly; they are not political appointments. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the two lawyers were

recommended and selected by the clients. They were not recommended by government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I would point out to the minister, Mr. Speaker, that in that case that is a case involving the government, not specific individuals. Again, I asked that question because the minister said he would provide it, but today he changed his mind.

This is a very unusual situation where the department goes out and hires prominent Tories to provide representation to government employees who are neither sued nor criminally charged. In fact, we have hired the former Minister of Justice and a PC campaign manager to sit in a courtroom and oversee a trial, something we believe that the department has plenty of solicitors that would be able to do that.

I ask Minister Manning: Why have you gone outside your own department to hire Mr. Kennedy and Ms Breen?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: I understand why the member would be confused, Mr. Speaker, as he has not sat in Cabinet and does not understand how it works, but I will explain to them that the lawyers hired by government represent the Queen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: The lawyers that work for government are not permitted by law to represent –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: The lawyers that are hired, that are working for government directly, Mr. Speaker, are not permitted by law to represent individuals outside of government. They work for government.

In this particular case my question back to the member opposite: Is he suggesting that we not support employees of government in a manner when there is an allegation of some potential criminal wrongdoing?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I believe the minister said these people were outside government but my understanding is that they work for government, so perhaps the minister can clarify that so we all understand why this Department of Justice went outside to hire Jerome Kennedy and Erin Breen on taxpayer funds.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: I certainly will clarify, Mr. Speaker, in case I did not say it clearly. Solicitors who are hired on a contract or permanent basis for government through the Department of Justice are hired to represent the government as a whole or government departments individually, or Crown corporations in some cases. They are not permitted to represent individual employees, by law, Mr. Speaker.

That is not a decision that the Minister of Justice or Cabinet makes. In this particular case, the individuals whom the allegations have been made against asked for representation, they asked for particular lawyers to represent them, and that is who has been selected. It has nothing to do with the minister or anyone else in this House making the selection.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand there is a lot of equipment needed for snow clearing operations on our highways this winter that is not yet ready to go into service; some of our depots are not fully prepared. Delays in maintenance and repair, including the late arrival of needed parts, seem to be a problem.

I ask the minister: How many pieces of equipment are not yet ready to respond to our winter conditions and when will they be ready to go into service?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have hundreds of pieces of equipment in our sixty-three depots. We have mechanics who work on them daily. Seventy per cent of our equipment is ready to operate now. On a constant basis we are doing repairs, we are doing assessments, and we are getting that equipment ready so we can better serve the people when we are doing snow clearing and make our roads safe for the people of this Province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: The West Coast and Central part of our Province, Mr. Speaker, are getting twenty-five centimetres of snow tomorrow, and I know there are depots in those areas that do not feel they are ready and prepared for that snow. Being prepared should be more than just a Snow Means Slow campaign, Mr. Speaker.

Why are our depots not fully prepared with all the equipment operating and ready to meet those winter conditions?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have very diligent, very well-trained personnel in our depots. We have state-of-the-art equipment. At times, there is equipment that needs to be maintained; there are times that things break that we need to fix, and we are going through that process, but we have more than enough equipment to handle any snowstorm that is thrown at us. We also have the ability to contract private contractors, when necessary.

Mr. Speaker, we have good, diligent people out there with good equipment ready to handle any storm that Mother Nature may throw at us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the RFP closing date for the Strait of Belle Isle ferry has experienced a number of delays this year. The people who rely on this service have been anxious for news on the awarding of the tender.

So I ask the minister: What is causing the delay, and when can we expect the tender to be awarded?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we had a very extensive process to determine through our RFP process who would be the best company to supply services to the people of Labrador. We have narrowed it down to a couple of components. We are looking at those; we are doing a full evaluation. We brought in a monitor also to work with us, a fairness monitor to make sure we get the best service for the people, the best return on our investment.

In the near future, Mr. Speaker, in the next few weeks, I will be announcing who will be the company that will offer the services to the people of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the people who rely on this essential service were told that the ferry would be ready in 2016.

So I ask the minister: Can you commit that the delay in awarding the tender will not delay that 2016 ready date for the ferry?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, we did have a very extensive process here. I am very pleased with the professionalism by our staff and the outside entities that were engaged here.

Mr. Speaker, yes, I can say that the ferries will be ready to operate in Labrador in 2016.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, a Budget news release in March says government will contribute \$10 million towards the Build Ventures fund and establish Venture Newfoundland and Labrador. The minister of the former Department of IBRD reminded us of this initiative in a Ministerial Statement on May 6, then on November 4 the Premier made a Budget announcement again.

I ask the minister to confirm: How much is your department investing in each venture capital fund?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. It is great to be able to stand and talk about investments our government is making to diversify the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. The particular funds that we announced were a combination of \$20 million. The Newfoundland fund is \$10 million. The Atlantic Canada Build Ventures fund would be \$10 million as well.

What I would be interested in is getting a clear message from the member as to where his party stands on it because on October 20 the Leader of the Opposition called for venture capital. Three or four days later, Mr. Antle, the candidate in St. John's East, condemned it and said it was a bad move for small business.

Perhaps we can clarify what the Liberal position is on venture capital in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, while government says it will contribute \$10 million towards Build Venture fund, the former minister confirmed in the 2014 Budget Estimates that a total of only \$5 million would be available for both funds to fund Venture Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the minister: Why are you providing inaccurate information to entrepreneurs and to the public?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I can say that we are providing a fair amount more than \$20 million to support small business in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Maybe the challenge is that the member is not fully aware of what is happening with economic diversification.

I would remind the member, for example, while his party stands to say that there is nothing happening in the technology industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, that today there are 3,300 jobs and more than \$1.6 billion in the Newfoundland economy because of investments like our government makes to support businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: In the venture capital fund, every single person in the Province who we have talked to, with the exception of the Liberal candidate in St. John's East, says it is a good thing to have venture capital to support small business.

So I ask the member again: Where do you stand? As the critic for this position, where do you stand on that issue?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the government's expensive, ill-fated experiment with electronic moose sensors has now come to an end and the devices have been turned off.

I ask the Minister of Environment and Conservation: When will he admit failure and remove these devices from our roadways so they do not cause a false sense of security?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we are just in the process of finalizing a Five-Year Moose

Management Plan. Part of that plan is going to be moose-vehicle collisions mitigation. We are looking at all options right now.

We have made the decision already, Mr. Speaker, that the options – that exact mitigation is not going to be part of that plan moving forward. We will have more of that in the coming days and weeks, and we will let the people of the Province know exactly where we stand.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, one solution which is being suggested is the clearing of brush and construction of more fences in locations where most moose-vehicle accidents have occurred.

I ask the minister: Is government keeping statistics on these collisions and where they occur, and identifying the most dangerous locations?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have assessed exactly what is happening on our highways. We have all the data relevant to where there are accidents. We are trying to come up with a strategy. We have a strategy in place now.

We are going to look at mitigating those moose-vehicle accidents. We are doing that by assessing the data, exactly where there are high-profile areas where there are accidents. We are going to assess how we put that in place.

Mr. Speaker, yes, we have that data. That data is being used as we design our go-forward plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development re-announced a number of child care initiatives that this government has failed to deliver on. This includes the long-promised child care registry intended to help parents find child care spaces. The registry was supposed to be in place this past summer, so we thought.

I ask the minister: What is the cause of the delay in delivering on your commitment?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, the child care registry will be an incredible piece of technology. We hope to have that up and working within the next two to three weeks.

This is something that AECENL, the Association of Early Childhood Educators Newfoundland and Labrador, have been looking for. It is something that parents have been looking for as well. No doubt it will be something that will be of great service to all who are involved, and we very much look forward to the launch of that. I would be happy to invite the member opposite to that launch within the next two weeks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Parents are looking forward to that, too, Mr. Speaker.

Government's promised review of the inclusion supports program was not included in yesterday's child care re-announcement. Meanwhile, child care providers are waiting months to access inclusion staff support funding for preschool children with special education needs.

I ask the minister: Will you deliver on the promised review of the inclusion supports

program this year, as you promised, and help children and their parents get the special supports they need in child care?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have certainly committed to is inclusion within our child care centres, and we have been working steadily toward that. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the budget has been steadily increasing. We started out with \$1.6 million, we are at \$1.8 million, and for next year we are looking at \$2 million in that.

What that has meant is that we have been able to provide over 115 additional inclusion supports to children within this Province. That is something that we are very, very happy about. If a child requires inclusion supports within our child care centres or within our family-based centres, Mr. Speaker, they are not denied. Those inclusion supports are provided.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, last spring it came to our attention that Oceanex, a private corporation, was proposing to develop a new laydown yard for their expanding container business. This project will require development of a new highway exchange on the Manuels Access Road. The Town of Conception Bay South has expressed concern with the proposal as it currently exists.

I ask the minister: Has Oceanex Corporation received any kind of indication that their proposal will be approved and funded in partnership with the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Only this past week I had conversations with councillors and the mayor from the Town of CBS about this issue. At this point, we have no proposal from Oceanex. We do have some indications from the Town of Paradise, but they would like to entertain looking at that.

At this point, there is nothing on our books. We are open to having open dialogue with all the municipalities and any company that wants to look at how they improve their business and how they improve transportation on the Northeast Avalon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government now says that children under five are important, as is the need for highly qualified early childhood educators. Currently, the wages of these ECE professionals are so low that government offers a wage subsidy in order to retain them.

I ask the Premier: When will this government recognize this profession by establishing a provincial minimum salary and benefits for early childhood educators?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Early childhood educators, and the recruitment and retention of them, is certainly something we have turned our attention to in this new department, and certainly as part of what had previously happened within the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

Mr. Speaker, the ten-year strategy was developed to look at quality, sufficiency, affordability. Those were the three pillars. Within looking at quality, looking to identify early childhood educators who were qualified

was something that was exceptionally important. Mr. Speaker, that is why supplements were put in place to improve the educational qualifications of these early childhood educators. That has been well-received by AECENL; that has been well-received by the early childhood educators themselves.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, because in the short term they are not getting enough money.

I ask the minister: When will the government replace the stop-gap wage supplement with a true wage and benefits minimum for early childhood educators?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If I would just continue on with that, what we did in that process was we did improve the salaries for our early childhood educators. We did look to removing the entry level to ensure that everybody is at least at a Level 1. Our preference would be to see a Level 2. In doing that, Mr. Speaker, we offered a number of bursaries that could help our early childhood educators to move forward.

For example, there is a bursary program that provides \$5,000 to graduates of a diploma program. That is receiving great attention in and around the particular industry itself; as well, the ECE training bursary which provides up to \$500 a year to eligible individuals who are taking courses either part-time or through distance.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I finally ask the minister once again: Instead of the patchwork-quilt approach, why won't this government create a public child care program for this Province and the families of the Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I assume that what the member opposite is asking for is something similar to what the federal NDP would have just announced, what had happened in Quebec and so on.

Interestingly enough, as I was doing some reading just in the last day or so I found a story in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, that I suggest she should take a look at, that talked about the fact that Quebec now has to back away from their commitment, Mr. Speaker. They have found that in fact what they were doing was they were subsidizing in areas where they could not afford to subsidize, Mr. Speaker, and they have looked at backing away from that.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to see that in a number of cases. What we are working forward on is a planned systematic approach to improving the situation, a sustainable approach, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, Jean is a recently widowed senior. She receives \$1,100 a month on OAS and GIS. Her rent is \$830. With heat and phone, her bills total \$1,040. That leaves her with \$60 a month for food, transportation, clothing, and everything else. She has fibromyalgia and cannot work anymore.

I ask the minister: When will he establish a special rental assistance program to help the

growing number of seniors, like Jean, who are living in poverty because of the high cost of housing?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. It is very important. The member will recognize, Mr. Speaker, and I will recognize her in stating that a number of cases she said she has raised and she has brought them forward to me, I have had officials follow up and look into them. Mr. Speaker, I would hope that we have made progress in those regards.

The issue of seniors, Mr. Speaker, is a challenging one. We recognize the demographics. Mr. Speaker, I have asked my officials, in conjunction with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, to take a look at some creative and innovative ways. We are presently doing that, and I would certainly hope that we would have something to report, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Given that we only have less than one minute for Petitions, I say we go to the private member's motion.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: I call on the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale now to begin debate on the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am certainly pleased to stand in this hon. House today to move the following private member's resolution, which was seconded by the Member for Port de Grave. I also want to thank the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development for giving me the opportunity to take leave this afternoon in this hon. House to debate the resolution on this floor.

I will read the resolution again, Mr. Speaker:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House encourages the provincial government, through its new Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, to identify and advance opportunities, build knowledge and capacity, and promote access and awareness so that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians embrace active, healthy lifestyles and habits within supportive environments that will serve them well throughout their lives.

That is the motion, Mr. Speaker, that we will be debating this afternoon. The concept of wellness is certainly a very broad concept. It refers or embraces or embodies a lot of aspects to an individual. It could refer to the social aspect, the spiritual aspect, the psychological aspect, the emotional aspect of an individual, the financial aspect of an individual, and, yes, the physical aspect of an individual as well.

The concept of wellness is an all-encompassing word that includes every member of the population, Mr. Speaker. We could include infants, children, teenagers, young adults, and older adults. It is a very broad topic that would elicit a lot of varied responses among the general population, even among us today.

We all know that the concept of wellness is a concept that we have to cope with because of probably two very good reasons: because of our sedentary lifestyle in which we engage in today or lack of engagement, I suppose, Mr. Speaker; and, our older and our aging population which

poses a real challenge for us today as a society. Because of automation, because of technology, because of affluence – we are an affluent society and we do not engage a lot of physical activity today in our regular kind of work. We have to go outside of that and schedule something in order for us to be engaged in some physical activity.

As a government, and as every stakeholder in this society, we wrestle. We are confronted with challenges such as high rates of obesity, diabetes, especially type 2 diabetes, which is a condition that was once found only in older adults. Today, they say it is more prevalent in teenagers, more than ever before. We wrestle with that as well, Mr. Speaker. We wrestle with mental illness and addictions concerns. We wrestle with substance abuse or use.

Mr. Speaker, there is a whole gamut of illnesses and diseases that we wrestle with today, simply because of our – two reasons in my opinion – sedentary lifestyle and our poor eating habits, I suppose, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one way to address this challenge today as a society, and as a government as a whole really, is to promote the awareness and the importance of one's lifestyle. What do you mean by that, Mr. Speaker? Well, we have a choice. We can be engaged in active living or inactive, or we can be eating right or not eating right. That is an individual choice we make, Mr. Speaker, but these two, activity and inactivity, is very important in our lifestyle.

For example, a Greek philosopher named Socrates, I remember years ago when I was studying in university, said: a sound body equals a sound mind. There is a lot of truth to that statement, Mr. Speaker. We have all heard our moms and dads say, or our educators say, you are what you eat. So it is very important. Physical activity and eating right are very important to who we really are and what kind of lifestyle we will adopt as a society and as an individual.

So, as a government, as a parent, as an agency, or as a society, we do have a choice. We can be proactive or we can be reactive in dealing with type 2 diabetes, or stress, or other diseases as well that we cope with day in and day out.

Of course, one of the cheapest and the simplest way to attack this culture of inactivity and our poor eating habits, Mr. Speaker, would be to engage in regular physical activity and probably have good eating habits as well. We all know from our education and from our reading these days that regular physical activity and being physically fit, combined with a well-balanced diet, will combat and prevent diseases; like I said earlier, such as diabetes, mental illness and addictions, and whatever. We all know that healthy people will equate to healthy communities. If you have healthy communities, you have sustainable programs along the way.

For everybody listening, what is physical fitness, you might say, since I am dealing with that topic quite a bit this afternoon. Simply, it is the capacity of an individual to work at an optimal efficiency without undue fatigue, Mr. Speaker, so that person could meet an emergency or be engaged in some regular physical recreational activity in their spare time. That is basically what physical fitness really is.

To achieve this level of physical fitness that would be beneficial to everybody in society, we would have to consider three main factors. That would be duration – how long would a person exercise? Usually the research would say probably thirty minutes. Then another factor, not only duration, would be frequency, which means how often would you exercise on a regular basis? Research would tell us probably three times a week would suffice.

The third factor we would be able to consider, Mr. Speaker, would be the intensity level, which is very, very important as well. The rule of thumb would be if you engage in some regular physical activity and you want to get some benefit from it, some physiological benefit that would change your heart and lungs and blood vessels, the rule of thumb would be 200, subtract your age – that would be the rule of thumb. That would be your target heart rate.

Your average heart rate is around seventy-two beats per minute. So if I want to exercise and get something out of it physiologically to impact my heart and lungs and blood vessels, I would make sure that the intensity level would be up to around 140-150 beats per minute, about thirty minutes, three times a week. That would

suffice, that would give us a real good physiological impact.

Mr. Speaker, I also realize, though, that physical exercise, a regular physical program, does take a lot of self-discipline as well, so we have to consider that as well.

There are a lot of benefits to regular physical exercise that are essential to staying healthy. You could probably write a book on them, Mr. Speaker. I will give you just a few: regular physical exercise. Well, a person would be better able to cope with stress. It increases your muscular endurance. It increases your muscular strength. It makes your heart grow stronger, bigger, and more efficient so it can pump blood around your body and to your brain. You will be able to sleep better as well.

It also increases your mental concentration, so it impacts your cognitive development as well. It helps control high blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol levels. It helps maintain and control your weight, Mr. Speaker. It reduces incidences of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, like I said earlier.

This is an interesting one, Mr. Speaker, as well; it also prevents muscle decay. They say inactive people lose muscle fibre at 3 per cent to 5 per cent at a rate every ten years, after you are thirty years old. By the age of sixty, your muscle fibre has lost 30 per cent. That is why you are weaker, I guess, in our senior age.

Regular physical activity also reduces the risk of depression and anxiety. I remember a few years back, Mr. Speaker, I read a book by Dr. Ken Cooper, and I saw a film on it as well. There was this individual in the United States who was sort of battling depression and anxiety. He really had suicidal tendencies and wanted to take his own life. He decided one way to do that is I will jog and run myself to death kind of thing.

He did it. He ran, he ran, and he ran until he became unconscious. Then he woke up. Well, it did not happen, so he tried it again the next day, Mr. Speaker. This pattern went on and on and on. Finally he realized he was better. What happened was that jogging and regular physical fitness just eased his burden, his frustrations, and

helped his mental state. It counterbalances depression and anxiety.

We all know the importance of regular physical exercise. For sure, Mr. Speaker, we all know the importance of a well-balanced diet as well. It is important what we eat, and we all know that. Although it is very difficult today, because we are fighting an industry that is probably profit-oriented as opposed to people-oriented; teenagers' fight with sugars, whatever, or power drinks, and fast food. That becomes a real problem. The Canada's Food Guide is always good to emphasize as parents, and as government as well, to eat your veggies, your fruits, milk products, your bread, your cereals, your meats, and vegetables.

It is a pleasure today to have this dialogue. We are not about to blame any particular sector or organization in society or government or whatever. It is good to have this dialogue about our inactive and sedentary lifestyle and the importance of eating properly.

Mr. Speaker, we are all stakeholders in this here. In sharing our responsibilities, we have to work together in tackling and wrestling this major problem. That is a society problem. I emphasize right now that is why our Premier on September 30 created a new Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development. This new department combines functions from a number of government departments into new branches more specifically focused on seniors, aging, and social development, as well as health promotion, wellness, and sport. That is a good move by our Premier and I applaud him for doing that.

Who are we? Who are the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker? We are families, we are individuals, we are schools, we are communities, we are service organizations, we are volunteers; and, of course, all levels of government, municipal, provincial, and federal. We all have a part to play in combatting physical inactivity, in combatting poor eating habits, and trying to encourage and bring awareness. That is the reason why we are debating this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. We are bringing a heightened awareness to promote the importance of wellness to our society, to children, to teenagers, to adults, to all of us.

There is no one single agency that can tackle this phenomenon or this concept of wellness by itself. We all need each other pulling on the same oar, working together on the same page, to combat this issue. We all have to realize that investing in our health is a positive thing. We all have to invest in our health and develop a healthy lifestyle.

As a government, we have been very proactive in addressing wellness, healthy active living, and the importance of eating a well-balanced diet, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to stop right here for now because I am very interested in what my colleagues have to say and members across the street there would have to say as well. I am eager to listen.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with the member who presented this private member's motion that this is a major issue facing all of the people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

In his private member's motion it mentions wellness – "... the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, to identify and advance opportunities, build knowledge and capacity, and promote access and awareness so that Newfoundland and Labradorians embrace active, healthy lifestyles and habits within supportive environments that will serve them well throughout their lives."

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the minister for anything he could do to help with the wellness of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and create a healthy lifestyle. There is no one in this hon. House who could stand and say that any one person or any one government can ever solve this problem. This is a problem that we, collectively, as people of all Newfoundland and Labrador must tackle ourselves. A government definitely has the ability to help promote, and educate, but we as individuals need to take the

responsibility upon ourselves to get more active and promote a better lifestyle. There is no easy solution to this. There is absolutely no easy solution.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make it very clear that this is not a government problem, or a Liberal problem, or an NDP problem. This is a collective problem for all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. You cannot lay blame to anybody. You just cannot do it. We need to continue to promote. We need to continue to put services in place so people have an opportunity to enhance the opportunities for a better lifestyle.

I will just give you an example: 30 per cent of Canadians right now are classified as obese, and the number is rising. That is alarming. As the obesity rises, we see the incidences of diabetes, heart problems, and a lot of medical problems. This has been steadily increasing over a number of years. There are a lot of younger people now who will have diabetes before their parents and pass away before their parents. Statistically it has risen, all because of an unhealthy lifestyle and obesity.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier about diabetes. Diabetes in the next ten to twenty years will be an epidemic in Canada – not just this Province, but in Canada. That is something that is going to be such a strain on our health care system. It is going to be such a strain on the workforce. It is going to be such a strain on individuals. Collectively, we have to try to find a way to help curb this in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I agree with what the member was saying earlier about obesity and that the number one cause for diabetes is obesity. We can see the kids, and we just look around at ourselves. We look around at some of us older ones; when we were going to school, Mr. Speaker, we used to have to walk back and forth. We would be out on the side of the street with a soccer ball or a few hockey sticks playing hockey. That is the kind of things we did in our generation. We went out and made our own fun. We have to promote that in some way among the youth.

This is not a complaint or it is not a knock on government, but it is just bringing attention that we need a registry for diabetes in this Province.

If there is any way that we can do it – and I know that government is working on it. I commend the government because I know they are working on it. We need it. The experts say we need it.

Mr. Speaker, remember what I said: this will become an epidemic. It is starting to become an epidemic in this Province and in Canada – not just Newfoundland and Labrador, but in Canada. We have to try to do what we can as legislators to help curb this problem.

Mr. Speaker, poverty reduction is another issue that is thrown around. I am not going to stand up here today and harp on the government about poverty reduction. There is no doubt there are major steps taken. There is absolutely no doubt, and I will be the first to say it. There have been steps taken. Can you solve it overnight? No. No government who is on that side of the House is going to solve that overnight. It just cannot happen. You have to take steps, gradually.

Mr. Speaker, I bet most people in this House are not even aware of it. People who are on assistance right now from government, according to Canada's Food Guide, they cannot even eat according to Canada's Food Guide because their income is not at the level enough to buy what is recommended in Canada's Food Guide.

Here we are promoting Canada's Food Guide and the less vulnerable in our Province – it is just not Newfoundland. Anything I say here is not just Newfoundland, because I am not trying to put any politics in this whatsoever. It is all across. You cannot even eat according to Canada's Food Guide because you do not have the resources. That is a major issue.

We can look at other issues related to that, Mr. Speaker. Once again, if you do not have the income, you do not have the ability to have your kids or yourself involved in physical activities. That is a major issue also.

Mr. Speaker, in the private member's motion it asks for healthy lifestyles within supportive environments that will serve them well throughout their lives. I will tell you what we need through our lives – again, Mr. Speaker, I

will acknowledge steps have been made – is social housing.

I am not sure how many other members in this Legislature get the calls I get looking for social housing, looking for assistance, affordable housing. I can assure you there are a lot of people, a lot of residents in Newfoundland and Labrador, right now as we speak, a lot of seniors, who are looking for affordable housing.

I did before, and I acknowledge it again, that the government has taken steps towards that – they have. Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that and I support that, but we need to come up with a plan for the whole Province of Newfoundland and Labrador where we can combat that a bit more. Then again, it is incumbent upon the provincial government to engage the federal government in discussions on that also because it is just not a provincial issue. The federal government also has a responsibility there, Mr. Speaker.

I know in the private member's motion we are asking for some initiatives – that is one great initiative that we can have for this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, which I hear on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, I know that a lot of seniors – I know the minister of the department and again I will say to the minister and I will say it in all honesty, if that minister could solve every problem today he would do it, if he had the means. Absolutely, there is no doubt that the minister is committed to this here. I just want to acknowledge that the minister is very committed to that. Mr. Speaker, that is why we, as parliamentarians, have to support these ideas; we have to try to work somehow together to ensure we can come up with some affordable housing for the seniors, and work with some affordable housing for the people who are less vulnerable in the Province.

As we all said, this is not just a problem in St. John's, or in Corner Brook, or in Labrador; it is all over the Province, Mr. Speaker. There have been steps taken, I have to say. I do not think there is one parliamentarian in this Legislature today – not one – who would not want to try to help out and do what we can to improve the lot of everybody in this Province.

There are some major concerns with affordable housing, and I urge the minister to work a bit harder and involve us, because I can give you the stats on the number of calls we get concerning people who are looking for affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, I notice also in the private member's statement is people with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, I have been involved – I have not been in the last couple of years, but before – with disability groups all across Canada. It is an important issue. In the private member's motion there are some suggestions. Someone with a disability, their number one issue is housing, accessible housing, because they want to have that independence. They want to be able to go into their own home.

I remember doing this years ago, back in the Sir Richard Squires Building, and I used to ask people to go into the building. I am going back twenty years when I got involved. I said go into the building. They would get in the wheelchair, they could not get into the building, the Sir Richard Squires Building in Corner, and they could not get in. That is the kind of thing that we need to look at. I know again, once again, I acknowledge there have been steps taken towards that for housing for people with disabilities, but we need to try to provide more housing so people could have their independence in it.

Mr. Speaker, the second number one issue for people with disabilities is transportation. Transportation is a major issue for people with disabilities. We all know the challenges they face. I do not need to go into it, but that is one of the major concerns.

Mr. Speaker, employment is – and I know the government, there is always a part of it that pushed for the open doors policy in the government. Is there any way we can expand that? A lot of people with disabilities have a lot to offer this Province, I can ensure you that. I have seen it; I have been part of it. A lot of people with a lot of disabilities have a lot to offer in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, another thing sometimes that we forget – and I am just bringing it up to the member because he asked for some suggestions

– is when a person with disabilities finds employment. One of the shortcomings of why a lot of people with disabilities cannot partake is the assistance while they are working. They need assistance. They may need some additional assistance while they are working.

It is great to say here is a job, and great to say okay, we can get you there, but there may be some employment assistance they need, Mr. Speaker, while they are there. That is a big part of it because with people with disabilities – and it is all according to what degree and what disability you do have, is that you do need a lot more assistance than the average person, and you may not need as much as some.

Mr. Speaker, before you can put a person with disabilities into it you have to do an assessment on their needs once they get into the employment. Once again, I acknowledge there have been steps taken. I acknowledge that. I would work with anybody here with that.

Mr. Speaker, in my last few minutes here I just want to talk about healthy lifestyles and recreation. I do not want to get into names or anything else, but the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development – and I am not going to pinpoint anybody – two years ago that minister got \$1,000 for a little school called Scared Heart.

Right now, because of that \$1,000, there are two glass backboards in that school. Last year every student in Grade 5 girls played basketball at that school, all because basketball started to become prominent. That was because the minister put money into it a few years back. That is the kind of initiative we need to promote sports. That is the kinds of things we do.

I know the Member for Humber West, Mr. Speaker, when he was principal and I was coaching basketball up there, I had access to the school any time I wanted to bring teams in. That is the kind of things we need to do in all rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. We need to co-operate and help out.

In a lot of those smaller communities, Mr. Speaker, the number one area they need, and the social point is the schools. I am not sure how we can have accessibility to the schools for the

weekends, night times. Back when I was growing up I was lucky, the Christian Brothers were at the old Regina, and the gym used to be open every Friday night, every Saturday. That was a few years ago, but the gym was open. We went in and played basketball every Friday night, every Saturday, every Saturday night, and Sundays we had to study and go to church. Mr. Speaker, we were active. That is the kind of things we need to do.

It just cannot happen overnight, Mr. Speaker. I know government has put in a lot of good policies and I know there is a lot of funding gone into it, but we have to come around as a society – not as government, but as a society – and say: What can we do better to help our communities? Sports is one way, walking, exercise, but we have to look at healthy eating. Because when you get some student come in and have a breakfast program, but if he goes home and there is not enough food or money on the table to eat healthy – there is a holistic approach to this.

I commend government today for bringing this forward. I commend the member for bringing this forward, because it is a big issue to all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I say anything we do to promote a healthy lifestyle to help our youth, help our individuals, Mr. Speaker, is helping our Province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a collective problem. The hon. member opposite talked about it as a collective problem, and this issue of wellness and physical activity is certainly a collective problem. The hon. member opposite did bring up some very good points.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to speak to the resolution from a physical activity point of view. Wellness is a very broad topic, as the hon. Member for Baie Verte – Springdale already said. General health in this Province, nobody

has to talk about our general health. We know we have general health concerns. Obesity and diabetes are not good numbers. It is probably the worst in the country, Mr. Speaker.

Our eating and nutrition; we all know our traditional eating habits are not good, they are not healthy. We have been trying to change. We have been trying to do some promotion, but to this point, Mr. Speaker, we still have some of the poorest nutrition in the country.

Physical activity, Mr. Speaker, is a piece that I am really interested in because of my years in Recreation and Sport. I want to speak to that mostly today. Physical activity comes in many forms, but it also has many good qualities. It is proven to reduce stress. It is also proven to improve mental health. It has been proven that it improves student attendance and student marks. We have better students.

Mr. Speaker, physical activity has many proven benefits for our society. I look across and I see the new hon. Member for Conception Bay South. We spent a few Canada Games together with many athletes. We hope those athletes are going to go on and be lifelong athletes and be physically active all their lives.

In my prior life, I spent twenty years in our Recreation and Sport Division. We spent twenty years of promoting recreation and physical activity. Today, I want to recognize my former colleagues in Recreation and Sport because I think they have done a tremendous job over the years promoting to the Province and continuing to support physical activity and better health in this Province.

For the twenty years I was in Recreation and Sport, we saw many programs which had major benefits. The hon. member talked about the \$1,000 to Sacred Heart. There have been many thousands of dollars come out of our Community Recreation Support Program that have benefited young people and have inspired young people to be physically active.

We do not see that benefit every day, Mr. Speaker. We do not go out to the fields, we do not go to the gyms, and we do not go to the walking trails to see the benefit that these people have had because we invested \$1,000 in

backboards for a gymnasium, or we invested \$1,000 to improve a ball field, or we have invested \$1,000 to improve a soccer pitch. Those small thousand dollar bills in communities throughout this Province, particularly in rural Newfoundland, went a long, long way to creating healthier individuals, young and old, in our Province.

As well, we talk about our Community Recreation Support Program, Mr. Speaker. In the Recreation and Sport Division that program as well has built playgrounds. I have heard all members of this House get up at one time or another and say I need a playground for a community in my district. That playground has been used by young people from ages three and on. Again, it improves the physical activity of our people.

Our physical activity program, I remember not so long ago – and I do not know if the program continued but it was in the Department of Education where the Department of Education supplied money for equipment to go to the schools for physical education programs. I think it was a pilot project and I think we kept it as part of our Physical Activity Equipment Program where we bought snowshoes so the kids could go outside and learn how to snowshoe and how to become physically active.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Yes, it is in that program. That is what I thought. Again, borrowing nets, nets so that the kids could go outside or in the gymnasium after school on an after school program and play ball hockey, or play indoor soccer, or any of those things.

Again, through the Physical Activity Equipment Program, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about Parasport. He talked about athletes with disabilities. Well, we have bought sit skis for young athletes who wanted to ski but did not have the equipment. We went out and purchased a sit ski so that young athlete, that person with a disability, could go and learn how to ski in his sit ski. It has made a difference in their lives. It has given great self-esteem, it has given them great social motivation, they have less sick, and they have been less dependent on

medication so we know what these small grants can do.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we talk about our community recreation development grants and for many of us here in this House, community recreation development grants, for those who do not know, are grants for communities with less than 6,000 people.

Any community in the Province can apply for those, and they support our summer recreation programs or our recreational programs in general that take place in communities all throughout this Province. They do not only support the program in terms of physical equipment or improving a facility, but it also helps hire staff so we have young students who can go out on the fields and help teach, maybe, some of our young people how to play ball, or even some of our adults for that matter.

Mr. Speaker, there are many programs over the last number of years and I am very proud to say over the last couple of years we have gotten into the senior recreation grants and they are very popular with our 50 Plus Clubs and our seniors' clubs throughout the Province.

I know in my district, in the District of Port de Grave, we ended up having to buy a treadmill. We had a treadmill for one of our 50 Plus Clubs and it was great because people would go down in the mornings, some of our fifty-plus citizens would go down at the club, get on the treadmill, become active and walk for thirty minutes; some would even jog. Since that grant has come into being, we have invested \$200,000 and since that grant has come into being over 100 communities in this Province have benefitted from our senior recreation grants.

Another project that I am aware of, they bought shuffleboard courts. Again, we do not think of shuffleboard as being overly active, but it had people outside, it got people participating, they are out playing, they were out competing, socializing. Shuffleboard was another popular piece there.

One of the most successful programs I think we have had in a long time is our Participation Nation Unplugged. That is in partnership with School Sport Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr.

Speaker. School Sport Newfoundland and Labrador has done a great job of attracting young people who were not active and did not participate in sport. Through this program of being unplugged, it is an alternative to competitive sport. It talks about having activity and physical activity, and these people have come out and they saw a positive impact.

We have had thousands of young people take part in the Participation Nation Unplugged. Thousands of young people have come out to enjoy the opportunity, particularly in their after school programs. Twenty-five communities have benefited through this program, Mr. Speaker, where they got \$25,000 to provide an after school program. Many young people who were not participating before have gone out to this program and are now participating in some type of physical activity. So we have increased there. The whole objective is for it to be fun. It is non-competitive. It is inclusive; any age, anybody, male, female, they can all compete together, as long as they are having fun, and it is non-competitive.

For some of us in this House, competitive sport has been our nature and we do not realize sometimes that to attract other people to the game it has to be more non-competitive. I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, throughout my years in government I was on the competitive side of sport and I was involved in our games programs, particularly our Canada Games program, our Newfoundland and Labrador Games program, and these were competitive. These were for our high-performance athletes. Through Canadian Sport for Life, we are hoping that these high-performance competitive athletes will continue to be active throughout their lives.

For me, and I look around and I know many, many members here in this House, though we were competitive athletes at one point, we continue to play. I continue to play rec hockey two nights a week, and I enjoy it just as much today as I did when I was a competitive athlete at fifteen, sixteen in high school, or playing intermediate hockey in the old CBN Hockey League.

I am looking across and he is smiling at me, my old volleyball teammate over there, and he is still playing volleyball. I guess he will always

play volleyball. Again, it is one of those things that being a competitive athlete does not mean you have to stop when you are eighteen years old or nineteen years old. You can continue to play and you can continue to be active and physically active.

It is probably more enjoyment today than when I was playing competitively because it is the social part. Not only are you doing yourself good, physically, but it is also the social and mental aspect that we improve as well.

Our games programs, Mr. Speaker, in recent years, through our Recreation and Sport Division, we started a Regional Games Hosting Program. Down on the Trinity shore I want to give a lot of credit to Mr. Allan Ash from Hant's Harbour. Mr. Ash started the regional games concept down the shore in the summertime.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Yes, Mr. Allan Ash, our regional games – it is non-competitive. He had over 100 young people from nine to fourteen years of age playing in seven different sports and enjoying it immensely. It was competitive but, again, it was social recreation. It was getting young people active in the summertime. Again, those types of activities and those types of games programs, even though they may be competitive, they have life-lasting possibilities.

I know the hon. member opposite also talked about the Poverty Reduction Strategy. We do not have all the solutions and we are not going to have all the solutions, but I know through our Jumpstart program with Canadian Tire, in partnership with Canadian Tire and our KidSport program, those programs are allowing young people who cannot participate in sport or dance or some type of physical activity, it is giving them the opportunity.

I know in my region, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of young people who have taken advantage of the Jumpstart program or the KidSport program so they could compete or they could play in minor hockey or go to dance class, or go to ballet or go to volleyball. So that part has helped, in some small way, to those people who could not afford it. I am very proud to say

that the Jumpstart program in our region has had a great impact.

I had a young, single mom come in to me earlier this year, in September, and she said: Glenn, my son wants to go in Taekwondo. I cannot get my son in Taekwondo; I cannot afford it. Through our chapter of Jumpstart, Mr. Speaker, I contacted our Chair of Jumpstart and that young person today is in Taekwondo. He had some mental health issues. He needed the opportunity to go out. Since he is in Taekwondo, his mental health issues have improved. That is a great example of using a program and getting a child involved in physical activity that has improved his overall mental health. I am glad to say that has happened.

Also, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years, particularly in the last five years that I was in the Recreation and Sport Division before I became a member, we started doing something called Eat Great and Participate. We were starting to go out and partner with our wellness branch in the Department of Health at the time. We were going out and talking to minor sport groups and other groups that we were associated with, arenas.

One of the biggest problems about going into a Newfoundland and Labrador arena, no matter what arena you do, the first place you go is to the canteen, and what do you go get? You go get french fries. Through the Eat Great and Participate program we have been trying to have healthier choices in our canteens and our arenas. Also, we have been promoting through the Eat Great and Participate program over the years, minor hockey banquets and sport banquets, healthier food choices there. Now we have gone away from hot dogs to sub sandwiches, or we have gone to pasta. We have had an impact there as well.

We have done some very, very good things to increase and improve our health overall. It has all been through our Recreation and Sport Division. I am very proud to say that.

Mr. Speaker, I could stand up here and speak for maybe another hour on various initiatives that I have been involved in personally over the last twenty years through Recreation and Sport. Through Recreation and Sport we have

addressed physical activity. Yes, we have to continue our education, we have to continue to promote, and we have to continue to make more people aware. An active, healthy lifestyle makes for active, healthy citizens and it will reduce health care in this Province.

In closing, these investments, Mr. Speaker, have made a positive impact on the social, mental, and physical well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very happy to stand up and speak to this private member's resolution today. I can say right off the top that it is something I think we all in this House can agree with when you look at the fact that the provincial government wants "to identify and advance opportunities, build knowledge and capacity, and promote access and awareness so that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians embrace active, healthy lifestyles...".

I do not see how there is anybody who can disagree with us as a Province trying to achieve this. It is one of those things you can never fully succeed in, but we have to make those efforts to get there and we have to work co-operatively to get there.

I was listening to the member opposite, the Member for Port de Grave. He was talking about his previous career. That is actually where I had the pleasure of meeting him the first time. Before either one of us was in politics, he was in the great District of Burgeo – La Poile promoting the Vancouver Olympic Torch Relay which he was a part of, and I was a part of the committee. We had some great meetings. That was something that united the Province, united the country in the pursuit of athletics. It was a great effort. That was the start of, I guess, our relationship there. It was a great endeavour.

It is amazing when we talk about this how many issues are interrelated in this Province that come down to access to healthier living. I am going to try my best, it may be a bit disjointed, but I want to talk about a few issues I can think of off the top and the way they relate and how you would not think of it, maybe right at the beginning, but when you sit down and look at it you realize they are having an effect on this pursuit, the pursuit of active, healthier lifestyles.

One of the major components to a healthier lifestyle, obviously, is your eating habits. It is no surprise to anybody in this House, studies have shown that in this Province right now we have a very high level of obesity and our eating habits may not be the best. I do not know if some of that is cultural, but I think some of it comes down to economic levels and some of it comes down to our availability of food. When you think about the sheer amount of food that comes into this Province through Marine Atlantic, and obviously Marine Atlantic being an issue that is very near and dear to me because it is located in my district, but it is also very important to everybody in this Province, or it should be.

Marine Atlantic does have a federal backdrop but I do believe the member introducing this motion mentioned that there is a responsibility on all levels of government – federal, municipal, provincial – to work together in this pursuit because at the end of the day we are going to have two things. We are going to have healthier Canadians and healthier Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and at the same time, this contributes to the cost of health care in this Province. The healthier we are the less our health care will, hopefully, cost. That would be the goal.

We look at Marine Atlantic, the amount of groceries that are coming in, the amount of food that is coming in; it is amazing. I have sat down at these stakeholder meetings that Marine Atlantic has and you listen to the groups that use it, whether it is the fisheries industry aquaculture that is trying to get their product out of the Province, or if you look at produce that is coming in. It is amazing.

You take something like strawberries. I have actually heard grocery companies and

distributors say that in many cases companies do not specifically want their product coming into Newfoundland through Marine Atlantic because by the time it gets here, the cost and everything else, the product may not be exactly what it should be. It is of lesser quality, and it gives their company a bad name and hurts their brand.

It is people who are not shipping here because it is not going to help that company. That is tragic when we are talking about strawberries or we are talking about any form of fresh fruit or produce. Now, the fact is we all know that living on this Island and living in Labrador, we do have a sense of isolation at many times, and we know we have to rely on the ferry coming in.

Marine Atlantic has made great strides in trying to have more on time and have more crossings. They have had an issue this summer where they reduced the crossings. I am not going to get into that right now; but, if the cost for Marine Atlantic continues to rise, then the distributors, these companies, are going to have to pay more to get their product here. Who is going to pay for this? It is the consumer.

Then we get into the cost of healthy living. It is costing me more to eat healthier. I want to eat healthier; I have a family. When I say I, I am talking about any person in this Province. Most of us have that desire to eat healthier. We talk about it, but when the cost is just so great and you are on a fixed income or you are on a budget, it is hard. It is very hard to do that. We look at the cost of a two litre of pop versus the cost of a two litre of milk, and we are dealing with that. We are grappling with that and struggling with it. It is something that we have to do more. We have to look within.

I think there are great steps we can take when it comes to agriculture. There are great steps when it comes to our farming industry that we can do here in this Province, whether that is livestock, or whether it is fruits and vegetables. There is more that we can do here. We have to make it easier. Where we can step in, in terms of governance, is by making it easier to do that. We have to make it easier and put an incentive in place for these people to do that.

Now, that is one thing; when we are talking about access to food, that is one issue. I want to

go to something we have been doing as an Official Opposition, and I have had the privilege of doing over the past number of months, and that is our seniors' forums as an Official Opposition that we did. The reason we have done these is because all of us in this House – talking as an Official Opposition, we deal with seniors all the time. We hear the Open Line calls, we watch the news, we see these issues on a daily basis, whether it is fixed income and the cost of living, whether it is affordable housing, whether it is access to health care.

So we decided, as a group, that we wanted to get out there, sit down one on one with seniors and those who care for seniors. Basically, when you think about it, it is everybody. We wanted to get out and talk to these people. We did not want to just go to the major urban areas. We wanted to have a good mix of urban and rural. We wanted to go to places. It was great. As a person I got to travel to many spots that I had not been before. That is one of the privileges of doing this job, is that you get to meet people and see places in this beautiful Province that you otherwise may not have had an opportunity.

We put together this forum, and the forum was not about talking, like I am doing here today; the forum was about listening. We went out to Lewisporte, we went to Arnold's Cove, we went to Winterton, we went to Bay Roberts, we went to Southlands, we went to Burgeo, we went to Corner Brook, and this Friday in my own district I am going to do one in Port aux Basques. The good news is that these are the ones just that we have done. I have had requests so far from Lab City, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Pasadena, Stephenville, Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander, Port Rexton, Clarendville, Marystown, and the east end of St. John's.

The good news is that people want to talk; they want to tell us. As legislators and policy-makers that is our job, to put in place policies that are for the betterment of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There is no better way to figure out what people want than by actually listening to them, and so that is what we did.

We sat down. The reception that we got was amazing. There were huge crowds in many places, which goes to show me that not only is it a huge demographic, but it is a demographic that

has concerns and they want to talk. They want what we want. They want us to see this. That is why I fully support this today. They want what we want. We all want the same thing, but sometimes we have to figure out how we get there.

When we listened, the concerns that we had were huge. Some of these very things that we talk about right here in this private member's resolution were things that were brought up by seniors and advocates in the community, brought up saying we need to do more. I am just going to give one example. I put this out and hopefully the government will take this and see if there is a way we can work with it.

I will give you one example. I heard at least on multiple occasions one of the big contributors at these sessions were 50 Plus Clubs. 50 Plus Clubs and their members were coming out and they were speaking. A lot of times it might have been their executive speaking on behalf or just members of the club.

One of the struggles that they are having – they do a great job at making this club accessible to seniors, but it is hard, it costs. The amount of money they have to raise just to keep the roof over their head in this club and keep the heat on is eating up a lot of their money and it is eating up a lot of their time in just the fundraising.

These groups – I look at the one home in Port aux Basques and I look at the one in Burgeo – offer programs for seniors, they are offering activities for seniors, and they put off dances. They are all things that lead to seniors getting outside, mixing, exercising, and having social involvement, all things that contribute to this concept of wellness. What they are doing is a great thing. They try their best to make it affordable, but the bills are there.

One of the things that I wonder if we can work on – and maybe it is there, and I am sure the minister and staff, if it is there, will let people like me know so when I talk to these groups I can pass that message on. Is there a way that we can reduce that burden somehow, through some means, so that clubs can use their funding to contribute to more activities for seniors? This is what they do; every time you talk to them they say the same thing: We are trying to get the

seniors out of their home. We all know that is for the betterment. That was a huge, huge thing.

Another thing that we saw is that many communities – again, I look down in Arnold's Cove, beautiful facilities, they have gyms, but in many cases we need that connection between the person that you want to use it and the facility. Sometimes it is an intimidating thing where people may want to try new things but they are nervous. That is a natural part of life. They want to try these new things, but maybe we can find a way to increase the co-ordination of that to get people out to access and utilize these things.

Most of these communities now, we have halls we can put programs in, but if you build it, hopefully you think they will come. We still have to make sure that people know, people have access to get there, and people want to do it. That was one of the things I have seen at the seniors' forum, just that people have that desire. People want to get out. People talk about wellness.

Another thing, when we talk about the access to health care – and I think that has been mentioned here – is promote access and awareness. So access is a huge issue: access to health care.

There is no particular department that is solely responsible for this. I think health care plays a role. I think Municipal Affairs plays a role. I think they all play a role. Even the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture plays a role. One of the big issues brought up to me was the food fishery. When you think about it, people getting out on the water to get a meal of fish, which we think is a God-given right, but it is not there. The minister knows and he agrees with it. I know he agrees with it. That is why we have to deal with the feds.

It is funny how that huge issue, an issue we have been struggling with for decades, at the end of the day it does affect wellness because people want to get out on the water; they want to get that food. It is sustainable. It is healthy. There are so many good things to it, but that is another level that we have to deal with and there is not enough time to get into it here today.

That is some of the issues, but this access to health care – one of the big issues that I saw, and I know members on all sides see this, and this comes down to awareness. I had a constituent who had to travel 1,800 kilometres for a three-minute appointment with a doctor in St. John's; 1,800 kilometres, the cost of hotels, the cost of food and they could have had the session with Telehealth through their own hospital which has that facility. So it is there.

The money that this person spent could have been better used. In some cases, people cannot afford that and again they come to the Department of Advanced Education who has to fund this. We have to make sure that the access is there. When it is there, we have to make sure that it is used. Does that mean more discussions with physicians, more discussions with local people to let them know that it is all right to ask if we do that appointment over the Telehealth link that is in a lot of these communities – I know in my communities, many of which are isolated, many of which are very rural, travelling through long distances to get there access to health care will mean a better standard of care and a better outcome, increase wellness, a reduced cost on our health care system, and the list goes on.

Our leader has talked about a number of things that go with this. He put this out so this is out there for public consumption when we talk about a diabetes prevention and management program, chronic disease prevention, youth wellness because that is one of the things – it is not misleading but we look at the department as the seniors and wellness, but we forget that wellness itself is not just related to seniors. Wellness is related to us all, young and old.

Wellness is a concept that we have to start at the very youngest. We have to start there. It is healthy eating in schools and making sure that parents have the ability to make sure that healthy meals are there for their children whether that is the Kids Eat Smart or whatever it means. A lot of communities have great volunteers doing it; we have to find a way to make that easier.

On that note, my time has expired so quickly. It is unfortunate, but what I can say is it is a privilege to talk to this. It is so important. We are going to continue talking about it and we are

glad to support the government's resolution here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

MR. JACKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank, first, the Parliamentary Secretary to Health and the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale for bringing this forward. I am going to start with a fact that I heard – I think it is probably about five years ago. I went to the federal, provincial, and territorial meetings in PEI. I was then at Tourism, Culture and Recreation. There was a presentation and this one statement in that presentation has stuck with me ever since and has bothered me.

The statement was: we have a generation of youth and if we continue on the same path that they are on they will not outlive their parents. I would ask everybody in this House to just think about that. We have a generation of youth who, unless their habits are changed, will not outlive their children.

Many of us here have young children of our own, and we have grandchildren. If we think on that statement there is not one of us who wants something bad to happen to our children or our grandchildren. Therefore, we have no choice but to do something about it.

The Premier called me. We talked about the role in Cabinet in September and he asked about leading this Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development. I will add there that we have the Disability Policy Office as well and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. That is included in the department as well.

I could not have been more privileged to take on the role. What I am hearing from people who are speaking here today, all of us collectively agree with where we need to go. As the Member for Port de Grave pointed out, there are many things that have happened already and

there are things that are continuing. I think people genuinely recognize that.

The Member for Burgeo – La Poile mentioned the cost of a carton of milk versus a two-litre of Pepsi. There is a choice other than Pepsi. It is water. We know, and any health official will tell you, the positive effects of drinking water. The other side of it is that we need to find ways to support those who cannot and who may not have the financial means to purchase milk or the healthy vegetable. We also have to remember the issues that are facing us are not all because people are on low incomes.

There are a couple of facts that I am going to say now and then I have said to staff I would just as soon leave those behind us. We have the highest obesity rate in all of Canada. We have the highest rate of type 2 diabetes in all of Canada. The cardiovascular problems that are present in our population are ever present. Anybody here knows somebody in their family who has had some bout with heart disease. Much of it has to do with our diet. There is no doubt about it.

I said to our staff the thing that I kind of like to focus on is that we should start right now. Everybody in this House of Assembly can start right now to lead a healthier lifestyle. We as politicians, I can guarantee you, it is not that glamorous a life when it comes to food, that is for certain. We find ourselves at functions upon functions and oftentimes it is the richest food that is there. Those are the ones that are the most appealing and the most tasty.

One of the members opposite mentioned we have to have to take the responsibility ourselves. There are things that government can do to help support people, and we do that through recreation programs. The Member for Burgeo – La Poile mentioned getting the seniors out and active. There are grants, applications, and programs that support seniors. All of us who have seniors groups in our districts know how much they come to us looking for grants. Many of them are very successful in getting those grants.

We know the importance of starting right now because all we have to do is to look at the pressures that are placed on the health care system because of the lifestyles that we as a

people lead. We can talk about the old days. Yes, they were. You walked to school. It is the strangest phenomena, I can remember as a kid that is was your parents singing out for you to come in. Now it is almost reversed, the parents singing at the child to go out. We have become controlled by our cellphones and our iPads.

This was another one I heard just recently. I was talking to a physiotherapist who said they are seeing, at as young as sixteen to eighteen years old, youth with problems here because of the amount of thumb activity that is going on. They are seeing people with problems with their posture because we are going around like this. All we have to do is drive up the street and look and see how many of our youth, and not only our youth, our adults who are going around like this.

The habits that we are forming because of the changes in our lifestyle, while they are here now as they present themselves, are placing a huge demand on our health care system. The healthier the population we have, the less demand we have on the health care system. We have got to, as someone else mentioned, take the responsibility. I have said this already, we have the opportunity.

We can start right now. I have generally attempted to lead as healthy a lifestyle as I can. I encourage my children to do that. Mr. Speaker, just look where we have gone to seek help. One of the places that we always go to help us change practice is to the schools. I have used this example many times.

The provincial fire department a number of years ago were trying to get smoke detectors in their homes. They were having a heck of a time trying to get it put in. Where did they go? Where did they start? The Learn Not To Burn campaign. Where did they start? They started in primary school. The reason they started in primary school is this; to a primary student the teacher is God, their king. If Ms says you have to put a smoke detector in the house, parents, you have to put it in, because your child is going to hound you – because Ms said it – until that happens.

We look to the school system to support us. Seniors, I think today, have become more

responsible for their health than ever, ever before. There is one group, Mr. Speaker, that I think we still need to work with and that is our parents. I have put it this way; the parents are the ones who fill the cupboards. The parents are the ones who decide what comes into the house and what gets served on the table. The teacher and parents are the two most influential people in the lives of children. The parents are the ones who set the role. They are the ones who set the model. They are the ones who lead and decide what their children do.

I can, for example, in my house say that in this room where the TV is, you are not using an iPad and you are not using a cellphone. You will get resistance. I can guarantee you will get resistance. The onus is on the parent to take that and make those rules. Make your kid do it. It is as simple as that.

Sometimes, I remember my kids, they used to say: But why do I have to do it? I used to say to them it is because I said so. It is just as simple as that: Because I said so. We need parents to be involved in this. We can get the schools to do as much as they possibly can.

I was at an event on Saturday night past with the Burin seniors' club. I would say there was probably, I do not know, 150 or so there. They have taken control of their situation and they are working to get them out. We need to support them to continue that kind of stuff.

I would encourage anybody who is listening to this today as a parent, my colleagues in the House of Assembly, to just state that we start right now. I am going to start right now. Then, of course, the challenge is sticking to it. We can all here afford to buy the things that we need. A large segment of our population can. Like I said, we have to find ways to support those who are not able to do it on their own.

I will put it to you this way, if we can lower the cost, Mr. Speaker, on the health care system whereby 40 per cent or a little bit over 40 per cent of our entire Budget goes to health care, if we can lower Type 2 diabetes, if we can lower our cardio problems, if we can lower diseases related to obesity, then we have money that we can invest in other areas. Then our social

programs become – we have more money to support these types of programs.

Fifteen minutes, we get to get up and speak on this. I have to mention one thing quickly. The Member for Port de Grave mentioned it. When we look at engaging people in active living, we have that competitive side and we need to support that. I went to a Recreation Newfoundland & Labrador conference just a couple of weekends ago to assure them that now that we have a department of seniors and wellness, that sector is not going to be abandoned. We want to make sure it is strong because oftentimes these people go and represent us as a Province, but the campaign that was launched in Grade 4, a little while ago, is a second part of what I would ask.

Start right now, the second part, is Find Your Fit! Find something that fits your lifestyle. If you are not a competitive person by nature, find something, whether that be start to go trouting. By the way, I am one of those. There is nothing I enjoy more than that, but a scattered walk, a membership to the gymnasium, a hike on the trail, gardening – someone told me there is nothing better for the mind than gardening – a walk along the beach and take somebody else with you.

My final word, Mr. Speaker, when you find that little fit, leave the gadgets behind, just for a half an hour or an hour and see what a difference it might make in your life.

I conclude by thanking everybody who took part in this. I encourage people to start right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, am very pleased to stand this afternoon and to speak to this private member's motion. For those who may just be tuning in let's repeat the motion for the moment, "BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House encourages the Provincial Government, through its new Department of Seniors, Wellness and

Social Development, to identify and advance opportunities, build knowledge and capacity, and promote access and awareness so that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians embrace active, healthy lifestyles and habits within supportive environments that will serve them throughout their lives."

This is a fine statement, Mr. Speaker. I have no problems with it, obviously. It reads like a vision statement of the department actually. Here we are standing in the House encouraging the department to do what I think it has written somewhere itself that it is going to do.

I think what we are going to have to look at, and what the department has to look at, is: What are the opportunities that will be advanced and how will they be advanced? How will access be promoted for healthy lifestyles? What is it that the department is going to help people with, with regard to reaching healthy lifestyles? Certainly, access to recreational opportunities, healthy affordable food and social interaction are all going to be important; but the question is: How will the department do the work of government to make all of that a reality?

Government has been looking at wellness for a long time – relatively long. In 2006, the government released a Provincial Wellness Plan. We have not had an update on that plan. We have copies of it, we know what has been put on paper, but we really have not heard from government where it has gotten with the various goals that are in that plan, and the various steps that government said in 2006 that it was going to do. You had plans for the first part of the ten years – we are now eight years into that plan; there are all kinds of things planned for the period between 2011-2014. Are they happening? We really do not know. What we do know is that in last year's Budget, in the 2013 Budget, it terminated provincial department positions that were there to implement the wellness plan.

So, here is a government that is telling us they are concerned about wellness, they have even taken it and put it in the name of a new department, yet this very government cut back on people who were doing the work to put their wellness plan in place. They cut out a health promotion consultant, and health promotion is

one of the key things of the wellness plan. They cut out one of two nutrition consultants, and good nutrition is an essential part of the wellness plan.

They cut out an environmental health consultant, and anybody today understands the importance of environmental health, the importance of what is going on around us when it comes to our having good health. They also cut out an injury prevention consultant. Again, preventing injuries that can have long-term effects on our well-being is extremely important.

So here is a government that said in 2006 it was concerned about wellness. It put a wellness plan in place for the Province, and then just seven years later it did cuts in positions where people from government would work directly with the Province, with the people in the Province around wellness.

There are a lot of questions to be asked of this government. Even taking wellness out of the population health branch of government and putting it into this new department does not make much sense either. Why didn't they leave it in the Population Health Branch, which would seem to be a logical place for wellness? It is rather curious. So maybe it is good that we vote for this resolution to say to government they have a lot of work to do, that we are not satisfied with how things have been going.

I want to take a minute to look at the population health strategy and to look at a part of it which is extremely important and fits right in with the motion that we have on the floor today. This is a strategic goal under population health, which is part of the wellness plan. The goal says, "By March 31, 2014," – which we passed some months ago – "the department will have enhanced initiatives that focus on prevention of illness and injury, and protection and promotion of health and well-being, to improve the health status of the population."

Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. member from the government side of the House, he must think they have not reached this goal. He must think this government is not doing what it should be doing by bringing forward this motion that he has brought forward today because basically, he is asking the government to do

what it says in its plan that it is doing. One of their own members is over there saying he does not think they are doing their job. So he wants us today to vote and pass a motion that is telling the department it should do its job. I find that extremely interesting, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to take a moment then to look at what government has written under its Strategic Issue 3, in its plan Population Health. One of the points they bring up is the point of healthy eating. I know my colleague just stood before me and spoke about the issues, spoke about eating and spoke about how we should not put all of the weight on people not being able to afford good food.

Well, I want to come back to that because I am not saying that anything he said is not important, but I want to emphasize the importance of looking at why talking about income is so important to talking about wellness. It is extremely important. We know the level of one's income is a real social indicator when we look at health and good health. It is a proven fact that the lower one's income is the more you have the possibility of poor health.

People in particular who live below the poverty line – and we have quite a percentage of our population who live below the poverty line – are in much greater risk of having poor health. Not only are they at a much greater risk of having poor health in an ongoing way, even the life expectancy of people who live under the poverty line is lowered by many, many years than those above the poverty line.

We do have to look at the fact of poverty. We do have to look at how can we be promoting wellness, promoting health and saying we care, while we have a Poverty Reduction Strategy that is basically dormant and which has not put money into the pockets of people.

We have an Income Support system that does not increase with the cost of living. When that happened for three years, or it was slightly more than three years, when government put this in sort of as a pilot, they did not raise the Income Support high enough to meet the cost to the poverty reduction level. They did, for a few years, do an increase each year with regard to

the Income Support according to the cost of living.

In the Budget, I think of 2013, they stopped doing that. Not only do people have too low a level of Income Support, at the same time they also are not getting an increase on an annual basis to try to match the cost of living increases that are going on. In actual fact, we have the lowest people in our population – let's say the lowest 10 per cent – who have diminishing income in that sense. Because income is a social indicator of health, that has to concern us.

I have said many times in this House of Assembly – it goes back over the last eight years, especially after they brought in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. I have said over and over again, the only way to reduce poverty is to put money into the hands of people. That is one of the reasons why, as a party, we are promoting raising the minimum wage. People have to have more money in order to be healthy. That is a bottom line.

When we talk about even starting a garden, starting a garden takes money, and low-income people do not even have the money to do that. If this government were serious about food and healthy eating, they would be putting resources into helping people develop community gardens. Not just telling them you should do it, but actually working with communities to make it happen, to create a network. Not sitting back and saying, well show us how dedicated you are and show us that you can go ahead and do this.

People who are trying to survive on low income are people who have – they are living from day to day trying to survive, so they need assistance. All people do, if you are going to put a community effort together. Having community gardens would be an excellent way to try to ensure that people are eating more healthily, and especially low-income people who do not have the resources to go to the supermarket and pay in the supermarket what is required to get fresh fruit and fresh vegetables. There is so much government could be doing to work with communities.

One of the things that I know in this Province is a fact, I can certainly speak for St. John's, that throughout the city there are communities of

people, in my own district alone I have the Rabbittown – well, Rabbittown is next door. I have the Georgestown community, I have the Virginia Park community, and I have the Quidi Vidi community. We have community associations, we have The Battery. All over the place there are community groups that if government reached out to them and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I am going to call a point of order. Could we have some decorum in this House while I am standing here and speaking? I require that for everybody.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you.

If government really wanted this to happen, government would be putting a plan in place and really working with community groups. I know we have networks out there, but government has not been working intently with those networks and putting resources in place.

Something else that government could do – I only have a couple of minutes left but I do want to point to it – is the whole issue of putting in place community-based clinics where we have primary health care teams. Primary health care – you are probably saying this is not the department that Wellness is in. No, it is not, but the departments have to work together. We cannot have departments as silos, they have to work together.

If we had primary health care teams around the Province – we have a couple – but if we had really fully functioning primary health care teams, then we will have on those teams educators and people who were there to work in the community with regard to the development of wellness programs and healthy eating programs.

There are so many ways in which government could be putting in place the infrastructure that is needed to get at the unhealthy habits that people have. This government just has a vision.

It is not even a vision. Their way of thinking is in silos. They do not see how to have the departments work together. They do all kinds of vision statements and then do not put into place the structure and the resources for the structure that are needed to help people work towards the goals that government is interested in.

We have a paper that has been put out by the Premier's health forum called the health forum discussion paper. It talks about primary health care teams and it talks about examples in Ontario. They are doing their homework. They are looking to places where things are happening. They are looking at primary health care teams across the country that have proven to be the most effective way to deal with chronic disease, to help people in actual fact not get disease, and to help people be healthy.

I do not have much more time, Mr. Speaker. I look forward, though, to taking part in the Premier's forums, and pointing out how these teams could really help with the wellness program that this government says on paper it is committed to.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the House today and speak to this important private member's motion introduced by the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

Mr. Speaker, as everyone has clearly articulated here today, we know that our population has very serious issues when it comes to healthy, active living. We are not unlike many other Canadian or North American jurisdictions. We need to change that. How I would say we differentiate is with our emphasis, through our new Premier, on wellness and healthy living.

In coming into office, one of the very first things Premier Davis did was establish the new Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development. In part, it is to focus on the overall wellness of our people as a whole, and of course, to put an emphasis on seniors who

certainly are so very deserving of any type of supports we can provide them.

They have given us a lifetime of wealth and wisdom. As taxpayers and citizens we certainly have to do what we can to support them as well, Mr. Speaker. In supporting our population as a whole, an emphasis on wellness and healthy living I think will serve us very well in the long term, both in terms of how we enjoy our lives as individuals, and how we mitigate health care costs and illnesses down the road.

Mr. Speaker, our emphasis on wellness encompasses healthy eating, being smoke free, physical activity, positive sport and recreation experiences, and all the things that we do to live healthier and be a positive example for our next generation. We have very good programs and excellent resources. I am going to elaborate a little bit on our Provincial Wellness Strategy in a bit.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy, Mr. Speaker, as well goes a long way towards wellness and trying to mitigate the challenges that people who find it difficult to afford items like milk, fruit, and vegetables are facing. Certainly our Poverty Reduction Strategy has taken us a long way in that regard. We have a great deal of work left to do.

We also, Mr. Speaker, are investing, as my colleague has outlined earlier, in sports venues, recreation facilities, parks, fitness equipment in schools, all the types of things that make a difference in children's lives. We support programs like Find Your Fit!, SportFest, Participation Nation Unplugged, age-friendly spaces, Healthy Students Healthy Schools, Eat Great and Participate, and the Good Food Challenge just to name a few. I am very pleased to see that a number of people in my district have signed up for the Good Food Challenge. I am sure many people across the Province are doing so as well.

Our Province's support of breastfeeding and healthy eating for toddlers is showing great success with increased rates of breastfeeding and decreased rates of overweight and obesity among Newfoundland and Labrador preschoolers, Mr. Speaker. We are making a difference that will carry forward for generations

and generations to come. That is very, very good news for the Province. Of course there is always room to do more and we cannot do it alone.

Over the past eleven years this government has helped create the environments and the venues, the opportunities and the programs to help people make positive choices about their own lifestyles and those of their children. We will continue this work, but we need the support of everyone to create the change that is needed to have healthier citizens throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our Premier, Mr. Speaker, and indeed our entire government's sincere desire through the new Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development is to lead people to those opportunities and programs, and to encourage them to start right away, and as Minister Jackman said earlier, to make the pledge this very day to take measures to live healthier lives.

Our Provincial Wellness Plan, Mr. Speaker, was originally released in 2006. Since that time, we have taken action in the areas of food and nutrition, tobacco control, injury prevention, school health, community action, and child development. We have implemented smoke free policies.

When I go into schools and talk to children about what we do as politicians, I explain to them that we are lawmakers. One of the laws I like to point out to them that they really notice and makes a visible difference to them is the law we introduced where there is no smoking if you have children in your cars, Mr. Speaker. It is a real example of how politicians make laws that improve the everyday lives of our citizens that they can relate to.

We have developed education programs, school food guidelines, and introduced legislation for child booster seats. We have provided wellness grants to many community organizations and supported wellness initiatives such as Kids Eat Smart, the Food Security Network, the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco, Baby-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador which is the breastfeeding coalition, and regional wellness coalitions.

We have been working with our stakeholders and our partners, Mr. Speaker, including the Provincial Wellness Advisory Council to gather information on the way we will deliver wellness programs and services in the best interests of the people across the Province. We are now preparing to advance towards Phase II. We continue to seek the valuable input of our citizens in that regard.

The Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development was created, as Minister Jackman said, earlier this year on September 30, 2014. It combines functions from a number of government departments into new branches that are more specifically focused on seniors, aging and social development, as well as health and promotion, wellness, and sports.

In the past four years, our government has invested more than \$1.2 million to promote the importance of healthy aging and to create more age-friendly communities through the Age-Friendly Grants Program. To date, thirty-eight communities have received funding to assess their age friendliness. Five existing age-friendly communities have received funding to implement next steps projects, and seventy-six grants have been provided to seniors' organizations and retiree groups to implement age-friendly projects, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased that we have seen these projects in my District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. Our Seniors 50 Plus Club was very – it was a program that they really enjoyed. They said it was a lot of work and every week their meetings involved either a presentation from a nutritionist or a dietician. They received training in healthy cooking. They took trips to the grocery stores together. At the end of it all, they cooked up a fine healthy meal for everyone to enjoy. They found it very educational, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, growing up in Newfoundland, particularly rural Newfoundland, we all love our salt beef. The emphasis on fruits and vegetables has become more important in recent years. They really enjoyed their talks with the dieticians. Diabetes is also a major issue where I come from. We have very high incidences throughout the entire Coast of Bays of diabetes. Everyone is taking steps themselves to make

sure that we continue to live longer, happier, healthier lives, so we are very pleased to be supporting these types of investments.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have spent another nearly \$1 million, \$963,000 actually, which has been committed to the Healthy Aging Research Program. This supports research in the area of aging and seniors and it is administered through the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research. These programs, Mr. Speaker, are all contributing to our emphasis on wellness and seniors overall.

On April 9, 2012 the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released Access. Inclusion. Equality, which is a strategy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. A first for Newfoundland and Labrador, the strategy is a framework to support action towards inclusion, making everyday activities accessible and inclusive.

Mr. Speaker, we are certainly delighted to see the number of persons living with challenges having the opportunity to get out and about amongst their peers, friends and colleagues and enjoying everyday activities, something as simple as attending a concert or going to mass; but the ability to get out and be around others is certainly improving their overall wellness, their healthy state of mind, and making them feel good and positive overall. Anything we can do to support any persons in our society is something we, as a government, are very committed to working towards.

Since the launch of Active, Healthy Newfoundland and Labrador, which was a recreation and sports strategy and that was launched in 2007, approximately \$192 million has been committed to recreation and sport infrastructure programming and athletic development throughout the Province – \$192 million since 2007, quite a significant investment, Mr. Speaker, and more to come.

Since 2004, over \$13.6 million has supported an average of 100 communities annually through the Capital Grant Program which is designed to assist with upgrades to recreation and sports infrastructure, as well as equipment for recreation programming.

As a person from a rural, remote area, with twenty-one communities to represent, I can tell you each and every year I receive twenty-one applications for that fund because all of my communities recognize the importance of recreation and physical activity. I have to say we are very fortunate that our children do still engage, to a fair degree, in a lot of outdoor activity.

Again, as Minister Jackman had discussed earlier, technology is obviously an important way of life for us these days. The importance of getting children away from the iPad, away from the BlackBerry every now and then really makes a difference.

Even myself, I am not young and I am not quite a senior yet; I am sort of in between. I find when I am on my BlackBerry too often the neck pain really does bother me. I think about what it is going to be like when I am sixty and seventy. I am really going to feel this. When I start to feel that ache, I get up, I move about, and probably take my dog out for a walk. She certainly lets me know when I have it in my hands too long; as I am sure many of our children do as well, those of you who have children.

Mr. Speaker, the emphasis on wellness and healthy living makes such a huge difference to our health, again, overall. There are ailments that affect many of our families. I know in my own family in particular we have incidences of cancer, we have incidences of kidney disease, we have incidences of diabetes, and heart attacks. Each and every one of us has a role to play to make that conscious decision to mitigate, where we can, our risks for many of these diseases. Sometimes there is no avoiding them, but where we can, we should all make a conscious effort to try to prolong the onset of any of these diseases as much as possible.

I spoke a little bit about Kids Eat Smart just a little while ago and how our government invests \$1 million annually to that program, Mr. Speaker. I thoroughly enjoyed last week spending a luncheon with them as they celebrated their AGM. In addition to the \$1 million that government provides, nearly another full \$1 million is raised by businesses, organizations, and communities that recognize

the value of this program and contribute to the Kids Eat Smart program so that communities all across Newfoundland and Labrador can benefit from this wonderful program.

All kids participate, Mr. Speaker. There is no distinction between the children. Each and every child who wants to come in for breakfast comes in and they enjoy the social networking opportunity. They go to classes and are performing much, much better in their exams and in their ability to pay attention throughout the day. Programs like this and volunteers who implement programs like this certainly deserve a great bouquet, and hats off to each and every one of them.

I know as a child myself one of the things that really influenced me were the ParticipACTION ads. I am sure many of you of my vintage remember those ParticipACTION ads: exercise, exercise, what is the great attraction. Today, ParticipACTION ads are back I am very pleased to see. Among them are programs like the Park the Car campaign which says, "Park the Car, It's Not That Far". If the convenience store is just at the end of the street, why not take a walk and leave the car at home, or why not jump on your bike. It really is making a difference; people do stop and think and sometimes do make the choice to park the car.

Other programs they have are things like Bring Back Play, Mr. Speaker. Again, I will say growing up in rural Newfoundland I was incredibly fortunate. Every day we played outside, rain or shine. If it was raining we put on our rubbers and rain gear and went out and made mud cakes, but if it was a beautiful day we played baseball, we played softball, we played tiddlywinks, we played Red Rover. We made up games like Sasquatch, and we had this wooded area that we would all run to and one person had to find everybody else. We always were outdoors and enjoying games. I think the more we encourage young children to get outside and play again, the happier all of us will be and we will see the benefits of it down the road, Mr. Speaker.

So, in conclusion, I would like to say the vision of our new Premier is certainly outstanding. He has clearly demonstrated a strong emphasis on

the importance of wellness and seniors for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: – and for all of you who are interested in providing us as a government with more information and insight into how we can do it better, I encourage you all to take the time to get out and participate in our upcoming health care consultations.

So, I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this today, and look forward to the continued improvements that we will achieve as we all work together and move forward with an emphasis on wellness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale will speak now and close debate.

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I just want to say a great big thank you to each member for their insights this afternoon who spoke to the motion. They certainly added to the great dialogue that occurred here.

The members were the Member for Bay of Islands – he agreed there was no single solution to this problem, it is everyone's problem, and collectively we work together. He agreed that as a government we are doing some great steps right now, major steps, and we had instituted some great policy.

I would like to thank the Member for Port de Grave. He emphasized the importance of regular physical activity and the department's role in recreation, and the departmental supports. I would like to thank the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, who supports the motion as well. He talked about eating habits, the seniors' involvement, and food availability and food costs, and transportation and access to health care.

I want to thank the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development. I really want to thank his passion and he found his fit, Mr. Speaker – he did find his fit here. He is passionate about this department, and he is doing a great job in that field, which I really appreciate. I would like to thank the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi. I am not sure she supports it, but I think she does. I am going to assume. I do not want to be presumptuous, but I am hoping to have unanimous support for this resolution this afternoon.

Finally, I would like to thank the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune who really gave a good overview of the initiatives that our government has put forward on this issue of wellness and healthy eating and healthy living.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, I would just like to go back to some of our stakeholders, schools for example: Copper Ridge Academy of Baie Verte, Indian River Academy school, in which I taught. I would like to applaud the schools and their initiatives in promoting healthy eating and healthy active living.

Some of the initiatives that they support would be the Kids Eat Smart program, the breakfast program. The schools have eliminated the sale of bars, chips, candy, soft drinks, and have eliminated all fried foods, Mr. Speaker. They are engaged in QDPE which is the Quality Physical Education program. They have had sports during lunch hour.

Mr. Speaker, the school in which I taught, Indian River Academy, years gone by now, my gym was open in the morning, recess, dinner hour, after school from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Basically Monday to Friday that gymnasium was open so that students could take part in various recreational activities. After supper, that gym was accessible to community groups. That is very important.

I would like to applaud Indian River Academy, Indian River High School, and Copper Ridge Academy – in fact, all schools across this Island for their endorsement of healthy eating and healthy living.

The other initiatives that Indian River Academy participated in over the years would be the

healthy snacks, fresh fruit breakfast program and school-wide aerobics session on the parking lot. We have had after school activities such as crafts, music, life skills, making the school open to community groups, the mentoring program, active living sessions, public health nurses come into the school and educating us as teachers and students the importance of healthy eating and healthy living, pop machines were removed from schools, Mr. Speaker.

I really want to say a great big thank you to the principals and staff and parents and the educational community, not only in my district, all the schools, but right across this great Province of ours that they have adopted and embraced the concept of wellness, they embraced the concept of health eating and healthy living.

I would like to go back to communities, Mr. Speaker. I live in Springdale. Springdale offers a lot of recreational programs. It could be curling. It could be swimming. It could be soccer. It could be softball. In fact, in the summer months we have over 100 kids involved in our swim program and in our soccer program, over 100 kids active throughout the summer. Come rain – I was going to say snow – or sunshine during the summer months, the kids will be there Monday to Friday engaged in swimming in an outdoor swimming pool which they all enjoy.

I want to applaud the communities for their maintenance of playgrounds and recreational activities, and for their budgets that they put forward so that they could offer recreational activities for the youth and children, Mr. Speaker. The communities engage in the Mayor's Walk, which promotes heart and lung disease I believe, and the big bike ride. I would like to applaud some of those communities right across the Province for hosting Clara's Big Ride, I believe, pertaining to increased awareness and promotion of mental illness. All of that is supported by the communities right across this great Province of ours.

Communities like La Scie, Baie Verte, Springdale, Middle Arm, Burlington, King's Point, all offer good recreational programs, supporting not only the youth and the children, but they also support seniors or older adults as

well. There is no compartmentalization of population, Mr. Speaker. We are all one. It could be seniors or infants. The towns in which we live support everybody in their community. I really want to give a great big shout out to all these communities right across the Island, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to point out that \$1.3 million has been allocated for the three-year Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Transportation Pilot Program to increase access for older adults, as well as individuals with mobility challenges through affordable and reliable transportation. This includes transportation to meet the activities of daily living including medical appointments, shopping, and socialization.

The groups selected for the pilot include, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Red Cross; St. John's Transportation Commission, the Metrobus; Bay St. George Area Development Association; the Town of Clarenville; and, the Town of Springdale. They are doing a tremendous job, all of these groups, in dealing with older adults in trying to eliminate the barriers such as transportation.

Mr. Speaker, again I want to applaud families for their job. They have to be a role model. If they want their children to drink milk or what have you, eat right, the families will have to model that as well and parents will have to model that as well. I want to thank them for their involvement.

Of course it comes down to an individual, Mr. Speaker. We all know that it comes down to person to person. Like our minister just said, he is going to start today, right now, active living and healthy eating, which I applaud. I really appreciate his leadership.

With that, I want to conclude. I just want to say a great big thank you again to every member who added to the dialogue and to the debate. I believe we will have unanimous support. I am really happy and pleased this afternoon to be able to stand up and bring in that motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the House ready for the question?

Shall the motion as put forward by the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale pass?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock.