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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear members' statements from the Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl South, St. John's East, Baie Verte – Springdale, St. John's South, Carbonear – Harbour Grace, and Exploits.

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

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

I rise to congratulate a remarkable woman on her most recent birthday.

Marjorie Redmond turned 102 years old on February 19. It has been a century of joy and music-making, if we judge by the reports of her birthday party.

She was born Marjorie Grouchy on February 19, 1913. Her parents were Alex and Isabelle Grouchy of St. John's. Marjorie grew up on Allan Square and Queen's Road here in the city. She was gifted with a natural musical ear, which was nurtured by the expert teaching of the nuns at Our Lady of Mercy.

She completed her post-secondary commercial program, and moved to Corner Brook to work for Bowater's. She met and married Michael Redmond and the couple returned to Tunis Court here in St. John's to raise seven children. She remained in her own home until she was ninety-seven years old, Mr. Speaker, when she moved to St. Patrick's Mercy Home.

Marjorie's love of music followed her through life. In the 1930s and 1940s, she played piano trios on radio. She played the organ at St. Pius X until she was eighty-eight years of age and continues to play, accompanying her granddaughters, Jacquelyn and Susan on a few tunes at her 102 birthday.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to salute Marjorie Redmond and wish her 102 years.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: In keeping with our tradition of standing and celebrating anybody who reaches the great milestone of 100 plus, let's give the number (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted to rise in this hon. House today to recognize a very special hockey team that made their parents, coaches and the entire community very proud.

During minor hockey week, the La Scie Jets peewee team travelled to Conception Bay South to compete in the 2014/15 all Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Championships Mega Tournament, in which over 340 enthusiastic athletes competed.

After two days of thrilling action and excitement to players and fans alike, Day 3, which was banner day, saw La Scie and Glovertown square off for the prized gold medal. Demonstrating sheer grit, determination, and teamwork, the La Scie Jets captured the championship title with a 6-3 score over the Glovertown squad. Don't practice until you get it right, practice until you can't get it wrong, was their motto.

Members of the team include: Josh Matthews, Rachel Drover, Tamara Drover, Josh Critch, Julian Ryan, Ben Thomas, Martin Andrews, Aaron Gillingham, Morgan Andrews, Tommy Ryan, Jordan King, and Shawn Matthews. Coaches Sheldon King and Phil Drover, along with volunteer parents are to be applauded for their outstanding efforts in guiding and supporting the team to victory.

Honourable colleagues, please join me in congratulating the La Scie Jets peewee hockey team upon winning goal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my privilege to stand in this hon. House to recognize an event which has become a showcase for some of the best young talent this Province has to offer. *Etcetera 29* entitled, *Just Think*, took place at the Mount Pearl Glacier last week from May 5-9, where all in attendance were treated to amazing instrumental, vocal, and dance performances from numerous musical genres.

From the Broadway Musical, *Cats*, to Bruno Mars' *Uptown Funk*, from selections from Dr. Seuss to Elton John, from Doctors without Borders – Aid for Africa to a Whiter Shade of Pale, *Etcetera 29* had it all.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Musical and Choir Director Carl Goulding, Production Manager Jackie Goulding, Artistic Director Justin Goulding, Stage Manager Rebecca Goulding, corporate sponsors, the parent committee, coaches, choreographers, set and costume designers, volunteers, and most importantly the members of the Mount Pearl Show Choir and the many other performers from Mount Pearl Senior High, Mount Pearl Intermediate, Morris Academy, Paradise Elementary, and Elizabeth Park Elementary on yet another tremendous *Etcetera* Show.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: Last week I had the honour of attending the St. Mary's Church CLB Annual Cadet Inspection. The event was attended by young cadets, their parents, as well as a number of senior members of the Church Lads Brigade.

For over 100 years the CLB has been providing young people with an opportunity to learn respect, confidence, and leadership in a disciplined atmosphere. The organization is to be commended for their years of community service.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of awards where several young people were recognized and bestowed awards for their accomplishments and commitment to the organization.

I would like to recognize those who received awards, the parents who support and volunteer, along with the many members who continue to ensure that the CLB provides the valuable services that it does.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Amy Gillingham of Carbonear who won the Senior Rose Bowl at the 2015 Kiwanis Music Festival held in Carbonear on March 26, the very same day she was accepted to the MUN School of Music.

Amy has been participating in the festival for many years, and was the recipient of the coveted Junior Rose Bowl in 2013. This year she grabbed the attention of adjudicators with her soprano opera-trained voice.

She also appeared to be the crowd favourite, after closing the show with an animated and dramatic version of a German ballad. Although it was not in English, Amy was able to tell the story, making the audience laugh through her acting skills.

Amy follows in the footsteps of her older sister, Alicia, who also won the Senior Rose Bowl in 2010 and the Junior Rose Bowl in 2008. Alicia graduates from MUN School of Music this month and will continue her master's studies at the University of Montreal in September.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Amy on winning the Senior Rose Bowl and wish her success in her music studies at Memorial.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, gardening is a hobby that has many benefits for young and old alike. Mr. Chad Langdon of Exploits Community Health Centre and a member of the Exploits Community Garden Steering Committee said "this is the fourth year for the project which gives people, especially seniors, the opportunity to grow their own vegetables."

This project would not be possible without the support of its partners, including the Botwood Boys and Girls Club, the Legion Action Committee, Central Regional Wellness Coalition, and Central Health.

"It promotes exercise, healthy food, and intergenerational relationships, connecting the elderly with our youth; it's a win-win process," said Mr. Langdon.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the Exploits Community Garden Committee on their fourth successful year.

Let's keep it growing forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to highlight the Energy Plan Progress Report, which I will table in the House of Assembly and make public on our website today.

This report provides an update on the most comprehensive energy plan in our Province's history and highlights the progress in matching our plan with the development of our energy resources.

By leading the way in oil and gas exploration and development, we are ensuring Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are getting jobs and contracts, so they can give back to the communities in which they live. We have secured equity stakes in offshore projects, invested in geoscience, and developed a new land tenure regime to facilitate exploration and increase the Province's competitiveness.

Mandated by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we created Nalcor Energy to manage energy projects on our behalf, to position the Province as a global player in the resource sector, and to bring long-term revenue to the Province. Over a total investment period of ten years, the provincial government will have invested \$3.1 billion in Nalcor. Every penny of that money will be returned to the Province by 2025-2026.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: From that time on, the dividends continue to increase for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Through legislation, we enabled the issuance of water rights to Nalcor on the Lower Churchill River, starting at Muskrat Falls which is now in its third year of construction. We are also building a long overdue link to North America's grid that will give us the ability to export power to markets and will greatly enhance our grid reliability.

We are investing capital in the Upper Churchill facility now to ensure it is in good condition when the Province is in the position to receive the full benefit of power in 2041.

We have invested in energy efficiency and taken steps to tackle climate change. And, we are shaping a culture that understands how to embrace an opportunity, negotiate globally, and achieve prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the efforts of many departments and agencies which have been involved in the implementation of the Energy Plan, including the Departments of Natural Resources, Advanced Education and Skills, Environment and Conservation, and the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

Our government has built a solid foundation for the development of our energy resources. Because of this foundation, the potential has never been better to partner on many promising energy projects, including the development of Bay du Nord; hydro sites such as Round Pond, Island Pond and Portland Creek; unlimited onshore and offshore wind resources; and energy conservation initiatives. Our Energy Plan was designed to give Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a real opportunity to be masters of their own destiny. Mr. Speaker, we are well on our way – and we know the future holds great promise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and the Progress Report which is not yet public. I look forward to seeing that and getting a copy of it. We have said so many times now that the 2007 Energy Plan is badly outdated and certainly needs updating now that it is 2015.

It is interesting that the minister talks about ensuring jobs for Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians where currently in our Province we are in the eighteenth consecutive month year over year of job losses – that is eighteen consecutive months. He must remember the module that is now currently built over in Asia, Mr. Speaker. That is not what is creating the jobs here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The minister also claims to have enabled water rights on the Lower Churchill, but I do remind the minister and this government that Nalcor will be in a Quebec court later in 2015, so it remains how that will all play out. This is a legal challenge as we know.

The minister also talks about energy resources. Through Bill 61, that squashes really the energy innovation that our Province badly needs. It really creates a monopoly on energy production. The people of our Province have heard this talk many, many times, Mr. Speaker, but actions are louder than words.

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 thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I am really glad I had it ahead of time because I was breathless when I first read it.

This statement is no more valuable than the paper it is printed on, Mr. Speaker. The minister has showed himself a master at telling half the story. We talk about the \$3.1 billion in Nalcor that is going to be paid back, what about the ongoing expenses and the over billion dollars that will still have to be spent?

He talks about through legislation we have water rights. That is seriously going to be fought in the courts, Mr. Speaker. We do not have water rights just because they wrote it on paper.

Talking about energy efficiency, we have enabling legislation for Muskrat Falls that took away the ability of anybody else in this Province to worry about energy. This is not worth the paper it is written on, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, with the Victoria Day long weekend fast approaching, I rise to remind residents around the Province about the risks associated with burning grass, brush and debris around their properties.

Forest fire season officially became on May 1 and will end on October 15 for the Island of Newfoundland. In Labrador, the season begins on May 15 and ends on September 30. Already this season, eighteen fires have been reported to fire suppression staff at the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that at this time of the year people are eager to clean up their property and one way they do that is to burn grass and brush.

The burning of grass, in particular, is a very dangerous practice and we ask that people not burn grass on their properties. Fine fuels such as dead vegetation in fields and other open areas that may appear to be wet can dry and burn in a matter of hours when conditions change. The smallest fires have the potential to quickly get out of control and cause serious damage to property and sometimes lead to forest fires.

Reducing the number of human-caused fires is an integral component of our fire prevention program; it can be achieved if residents adhere to safe burning practices. A permit to burn is required under the Forestry Act for anyone wishing to burn brush and debris as part of clean-up activities around properties on or within 300 metres of forest land during the forest fire season. The lighting of fires for cooking and camping does not require a permit but certain forest fire regulations must be followed. Permits to burn and copies of the forest fire regulations can be obtained at the

regional or district forest management offices throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, forest fires are a serious matter and Budget 2015 provides \$3.9 million for forest fire control measures. The provincial government's fire suppression staff, Incident Management Team, Air Services pilots, maintenance crews and other employees do tremendous work to protect our forests, our property, and our people. We can assist them by being careful and helping to stop preventable fires from ever starting.

As residents tackle spring cleaning and head out to their cabins, parks, and campgrounds this weekend, and all throughout the year, I encourage them all to keep fire safety foremost in their minds.

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 his statement. Mr. Speaker, before we get into it, we have to thank our staff. The staff who work and puts their lives on the lines are to be commended.

I had an unfortunate incident back in York Harbour a few years back when the staff went to a forest fire. You could see how much they put their lives at risk to protect people's property, people's homes, and the individuals. So it is incumbent on all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that if we have a fire, if we start a fire, that we do it in a safe and a very reliable manner.

As the minister mentioned in some cases the burning of grass, I have seen that go out of control many times. Permits are very important to notify the fire departments and town councils.

I ask all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, that they be vigilant and they take their own responsibility to ensure that we do not have any fires this year, not only putting properties at risk and people at risk, but

also putting the workers at risk. I commend the minister and the government also to do whatever they can to help with the fire prevention in the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. Mr. Speaker, here is hoping that the \$3.9 million that they have allocated in the Budget this year for fire control and suppression does not get spent, that we see that \$3.9 million stay as it is.

Mr. Speaker, we would also like to encourage fire safety over on this side. I also have to admit that the forest being a very important natural resource of ours; it is bad enough right now that we put up with the human condition, the human cause of fires sometimes, but with climate change, especially in the future, we know that spontaneous combustion can indeed cause fires. So we thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nalcor Energy spent \$1.4 million on a marketing and advertising campaign last year. That is an increase of \$200,000 from the previous year.

I ask the Premier: While the Province runs a deficit, you freeze discretionary spending, transfers of hundreds of millions of dollars to

Nalcor, why is it that Nalcor is allowed to spend \$1.4 million on marketing last year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, Nalcor operates as a separate entity, a Crown corporation, and they are doing business both domestically, nationally, and internationally. They have six lines of business which include Churchill Falls, Muskrat Falls, Hydro, energy marketing, Bull Arm, and oil and gas. They are all over the world. They are making significant investments on behalf of the people of the Province.

It is important that they are out there and they are engaged and they are selling and promoting Newfoundland and Labrador and the resources that we have so we can get a return on investment, as well as laying out a bright future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister that while Nalcor is independently spending this money, this government is actually writing cheques to Nalcor to pay those bills.

We also asked each government department how much they spent on marketing and advertising last year. Twelve of the fourteen departments have responded. The twelve departments spent \$1.4 million combined.

I ask the Premier: Why are you satisfied to let Nalcor spend the equivalent of twelve government departments on advertising?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, again the position the Leader of the Opposition is taking is that

Nalcor should not be out there promoting Newfoundland and Labrador. They should not be out there seeking and attracting new companies, such as Statoil.

When we go to these tradeshow, Mr. Speaker, when we travel around the world, we are in competition globally; but I can tell you, because of the people at Nalcor, because of the decisions of this government, we can compete anywhere in the world. We have the resources to back it up, and we expect Nalcor to ensure that we are competitive around this world.

Mr. Speaker, they have to spend money to market. At the same time, if there are issues in this Province that the people of the Province need to know, I fully expect Nalcor to be able to make sure that people are aware of what is happening within their business lines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, the minister does not understand the marketing and advertising campaign at Nalcor because \$446,000 was spent to tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador they are ready. That is not promoting Newfoundland and Labrador to other countries. We all know that Hydro was not winter ready and the power did go out.

I ask the Premier: Since Hydro was not winter ready, who is accountable for the \$446,000 that was spent on that campaign?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the actual amount was a little less than \$446,000. The process that was followed – we all recall what the Province went through in January 2014. It was a very difficult time in the Province. It was acknowledged and, at the time, as minister, we committed to get the answers. At the same time the Opposition had a lot of questions, and there

were a lot of fears and doubts put in the people of the Province around the reliability of our power system. Part of the reason why we are building Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, is to improve that reliability.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, people had concerns. It was important that a certain amount of work get done and that it be conveyed to the people of the Province that this work is done and we are in a much better place with our power supply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, a marketing and advertising campaign to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Glossy mail outs did nothing to make sure that the lights were on in Newfoundland and Labrador this winter.

The minister also mentioned reliability, and this is an issue. Reliability of power is an issue, but Nalcor is refusing to release information to Newfoundland Power on the reliability of the system post Muskrat Falls. Government's own documents say it would take two weeks to restore power if the transmission lines go down.

I ask the Premier: Since you say that Holyrood will come offline after Muskrat Falls, why don't you release the backup plan that Newfoundland Power and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are looking for?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the investments in Muskrat Falls, there are a multitude of benefits from that. One of them is around reliability, because we are going to move from an isolated system to an interconnected system so power can run both ways. That is one important point of Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to post Muskrat Falls and the devolution of Holyrood and so on, Mr. Speaker,

it has been clearly articulated, there is a process with the Public Utilities Board. As I outlined last week here in this House, there has been a fifty-seven page document filed with the Public Utilities Board. Liberty, an outside independent firm, is doing assessments. If there is more information needed, I can assure you that Hydro will provide it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We will take the minister up on that certainty for sure. So we will expect to see Hydro release that information publicly very soon, I would guess. That seems to be the way things work, soon or very soon.

Mr. Speaker, emergency responders in the Western region are reporting extended delays in receiving calls for assistance through the new 911 system. These instances are resulting in unnecessary extended response time.

So, I ask the Premier: Why is the so-called new 911 system causing delayed response times?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question. It is my understanding, in this particular case on the West Coast, the initial 911 call that was made had requested the services of an ambulance and not the fire department. In turn, subsequent to that, the call was forwarded to the fire department, but I think what is important to understand is that when 911 dispatches the call, the first responder for emergency services would be with the police, who then would enlist other services as required.

What I would say to the member opposite, it is very important here in all instances in the Province, this is a new system for most of the Province, it is very important that the fire chief

raise his concerns with the 911 board so that we can make sure in instances like this where we need to fix or change how we do things, that we do that so the service is consistent and good.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The incident in Cox's Cove, I think the minister was referring to, resulted in an ambulance response time of forty-five minutes. The fire department was not notified of the emergency because it was a call-forwarding system not a dispatch system.

I ask the Premier: Do you agree with such a delay in response time? It is totally unacceptable. You must agree that this is totally unacceptable and must be corrected before people's lives are negatively impacted.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the member opposite, that any delay of emergency response in the case of an accident or such an incident where emergency services are required is absolutely unacceptable, and all of us, I am sure all members in this House would agree with that. We all have to strive to have the best system possible.

As I said a few moments ago, I would encourage in this instance the fire chief to meet with the 911 bureau and other emergency providers because we have to ensure we learn from this incident and we improve things on a go-forward basis. The only way we can do that is if the emergency responders on the ground are working directly with the 911 board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, there was not just one incident, there was a second one as well. Fire chiefs throughout Western Newfoundland are questioning the new 911 system and are requesting a dispatch system for the region. At a recent highway accident near Pasadena the police and the ambulance responded but there was also a request for the fire department to respond, but guess what? The message was not relayed to them right away.

I ask the Premier: Following these incidents that we have just mentioned, will you commit to revisiting the 911 system and consider the implementation of a dispatch system rather than this call-forwarding system that you have put in place?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, to repeat myself, I said a few moments ago I share the concerns with the Leader of the Opposition. As minister, I will certainly take an opportunity on any individual circumstance to have a look at the situation and what has happened and what can be done to improve the situation. I have asked my staff in this particular case to reach out to the 911 board.

What is critically important here, Mr. Speaker, is that the focus be on the service delivery and ensuring the 911 system is operating in a manner that we get timely responses. That requires communication and coordination amongst all emergency providers. That is where my focus is. We have to move from where we are today, improve the system, and change the things that need to be changed.

I thank the member for the question. It is an important issue and we certainly agree with him on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, last week in this House, the Minister of Transportation and Works stated that Labrador airstrips were the only airstrips in the Province not having landing fees. Well, the reality is that of the six airstrips operated by the government on the Island portion of the Province, airstrips such as Clarenville and Fogo Island, none of them have landing fees.

I ask the minister: Why would you allow outrageous fees for some parts of the Province while others have no landing fees at all?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is correct, I did say there were no – they were the only ones where there were fees that they were not paying that we would now impose. The other strips that he refers to, there are no additional costs related to it. There are no staffing there. There are no terminals there. There are no lighting systems. There are no navigation systems there, Mr. Speaker. So the taxpayers do not incur a cost there that has to be paid out or distributed around the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In Labrador, we do our best to ensure there are terminals there, that people have the amenities they need when they land on these strips, and that we have the staff in place to make sure those strips are cleared and that navigation systems are in place to ensure safety for the people travelling to the Coast of Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder who does the maintenance on them, snow clearing, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said in Estimates that the Province expects to generate \$300,000 in revenue from the landing fees imposed on Labrador airstrips. Both airlines servicing Labrador, Air Labrador and Innu Mikun, say without exaggeration that it would be more like \$800,000. That is \$500,000 more on the backs of those who already pay the highest fares in the Province.

I ask the minister: How can you make such a drastic mistake on the backs of people in Northern, Southern, and Central Labrador, the people you claim you are committed to?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The fees that we impose here, Mr. Speaker, are based on the principle of improving the service for the people of Labrador. We have heard complaints last year, and rightfully so, that the terminals were not up to par because of the freeze ups there. We have opportunities there now to improve that, to make sure that washroom facilities are operational year-round. So we invested substantial amounts of money.

One toilet alone could cost us up to \$5,000. We wanted to make sure all these terminals were operational for people. We also are working with our staff up there to ensure, because there are scheduled flights going up there, that we always have the airstrips maintained and we always have people ready to meet those planes as they land. That is the difference between what we are investing in Labrador and those strips that now have no services.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs have

initiated a review of Crown lands in our Province. The Humber Valley regional planning authority has wasted almost \$700,000 to date, and still no report.

With the Crown lands review, is the planning authority still functional; and if so, when can the public expect that report?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There has been significant work done by the Humber planning authority over the past year. There have been several dialogues back and forth with the department in terms of when they submitted the original plan. There have been recent consultations and discussions with the consultant; I understand that transpired over the last couple of weeks.

We are looking at finalizing that document and once it comes forward to the department, we will certainly look at the amendment and moving it forward for the people of the West Coast.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Don Downer, Chairperson of the past PC candidate, co-campaign manager for the former Premier, seven years as Chairperson, and still no report.

I ask the minister: With your new and open accountable view on government, will you table in this House the amount paid to Don Downer, the total cost to the taxpayers of the Humber Valley regional planning authority to date, without any report?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding the former Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, the now current Minister of Health and Community Services, did table actual documents with regard to expenses; but whatever the hon. member is referring to, I will certainly do everything I can to make that information available, make it available to the House, and just certainly make it available to him as soon as I possibly can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In a four-year period from 2009 to 2012, the Auditor General made 133 recommendations to improve operational efficiencies, reduce waste, and the risk of fraud – recommendations that remain not fully implemented for years.

I ask the minister: Don't you think the Auditor General is important; why are you not listening to him?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have said in this House many times, and I will repeat it again today, we respect the work that the Auditor General does as a very important function on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why, Mr. Speaker, all of the recommendations that he ever makes, that office ever makes to government, we review them and initiate some form of action.

One of the things we have done in the last four years and the most recent report talked about two aspects. A group of those recommendations have been fully implemented and a group has been actioned. We have actioned over 90 per cent. In fact, I think it is close to 93 per cent of

all the recommendations have been actioned, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I hope his definition of action is a lot different than the money they spent on the core mandate review that has not been implemented over there.

In the last two years, 2013 and 2014, the Auditor General made another 176 recommendations. We do not know the status of their implementation, but if history is any indication, there are many still outstanding there as well.

I ask the minister: If you were are so concerned about finding efficiencies and creating a culture of cost management, why haven't you concentrated your efforts to act quickly on the AG's recommendations?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how the member would reference action or reference effort, but if you look at 588 recommendations over a four-year period and 93 per cent of them actioned and work in progress on some others, that is a significant piece of work.

So when you talk about why haven't you taken some action and why wouldn't you respond to the recommendations, that is a pretty good average: 93 per cent of them actioned.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the things about improving operations, as I have said in this House many times, it is not an event where it is once done and over. As a government, we will always be looking at ways to improve how we do things and we will always take actions on serious recommendations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, this past Friday, government released the recommendations of a report of the Child Death Review Committee. The Minister of Justice received the report on March 11. The Child and Youth Advocate received the report on May 6, just two days prior to its release.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services: When did he receive the report?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we have said in this House many times, there can be nothing more important, more concerning, more of a critical matter to families than the loss of a child, the loss of a loved one. I can tell you that we have committed to the Child and Youth Advocate that upon the loss of life, the death of a child or youth who is in the care or receiving services from the government, that we would notify the Advocate as soon as possible.

We had the Advocate in. She has met with me and met with Cabinet to discuss the terminology and what we consider to be critical incidents. We have agreed to have a working group work together, Mr. Speaker. We are doing that as well.

We take the Advocate's role very seriously. We take the death of children and youth very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and we are working very closely with the Advocate to make sure we have the best policies for the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, that question had nothing to do with the Advocate; it was a question to the Minister of CYFS of when he received the report. This question has to do with the Advocate.

In her report, *SIXTEEN*, the Advocate said, "... we as a society are failing our most vulnerable children who require our assistance and guidance into adulthood." One of the cases reviewed was the death of a youth receiving services from CYFS – the cause of death being Asthma. The Committee recommended that youth be assessed in their ability to care for themselves as they transition to independent living. The Child and Youth Advocate made the same recommendation in her October 2013 investigative report, *SIXTEEN*.

I ask the Minister of CYFS: Why are youth still falling through the cracks as they transition to independent living?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I have said on a number of occasions when I rise on my feet in this House the progress that we have made, particularly with the youth. When a youth transitions out of the care or out of the services when they turn sixteen, it is a voluntary program.

What we did back in 2011 with the improvements we made to the legislation, we put a number of wraparound services around. Again, acknowledging it is a voluntary service, when that youth, after turning sixteen, wishes to come within those service boundaries, we do everything we can for that youth. We have made significant improvements since 2011 in particular, as well as since this department has been formed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, Budget 2015 resulted in a new fee structure at provincial swimming pools in Gander, Corner Brook, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. This fee was implemented without any consultation with

those directly affected and have no consideration of the impact it would have on users of these facilities.

I ask the minister: Why was the new fee structure implemented without any consultation with people directly impacted?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, these are three pools that have a unique set-up within the Province. After a review what we did is we looked at prices at pools across various communities across the Province and we instituted a policy on these three pools similar to those.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, in many cases, the rates being charged at these pools are still lower than what we see at many of our facilities across the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, that is not the information I received by telephone about forty minutes ago.

Mr. Speaker, this government continuously prides itself on the promotion of wellness and physical activity throughout the Province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: – yet this new fee will negatively impact recreation and the operation of swim clubs who will now face up to \$12,000 per year for the cost of training hours.

I ask the minister: At the same time you are promoting wellness and physical activity, why are you putting the viability of these swim clubs at risk?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where from he got his call just before he came to the House. All I can tell you is that the fees we have brought in are comparable to those and, in many cases, still below what they are across the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to him that the fees that are being charged in these are comparable to the ones that residents are paying in his district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, nine weeks ago the Premier stated that in the coming weeks he will release a workforce development action plan to guide the Province over the next five years. Yet there was no mention of this plan in the Throne Speech or in the Budget.

I ask the Premier: How many more weeks do the people of the Province have to wait for you to release a workforce development action plan?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the member would have taken a look at one of the reports that came out just recently, the Job Vacancy Report. Reports of this nature assist businesses in the work that they need to do around planning. It assists residents who can then get into career planning. Likewise, the job market one, as I have said, will be coming out very shortly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, both the Throne Speech and the Budget talked about aligning the workforce with local job opportunities and promoting those opportunities here and abroad. The reality is our population is dropping. We are losing jobs. We are into our eighteenth consecutive month of year-over-year job losses. Meanwhile, government is late on its Population Growth Strategy – in 2012 I think that office was created – and now a workforce development action plan.

I ask the Premier again: Why aren't you treating this with the urgency that it deserves?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am going to invite the hon. member to the launch of our Population Growth Strategy very soon. I do not think she is following up to our website. Maybe she should go in and take a look at the website.

As I mentioned to you, as I mentioned previously, the Job Vacancy Report does exactly what she has just asked in the question. It is providing information so that employers and residents can make decisions about what is happening in the workforce at this particular point, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In Budget 2015, one of government's eight so-called guiding stars is their plan to consolidate administrative functions among the regional health authorities and to marry those with the functions of the Centre for Health Information.

I ask the Premier: What is the stand-alone shared service organization that is the goal of this plan?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that members in this House would make statements and ask questions about providing the best quality service that we can. In health, that means providing front-line services with efficient back office services.

If we could use technology or other means to improve upon those efficiencies, I would hope that we in this House would support that. I ask the member opposite to support us in that and support Eastern Health in going in that direction.

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 ask the Premier: Is he planning on passing over the key functions that are outlined in the Budget, key functions of the four authorities and the centre, to a private company to run our health care system?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Health has said here in the House several times consolidating the back office management system across all health boards is what the move is about. Mr. Speaker, that will be done within the authorities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Budget speaks specifically to an organization, a stand-alone shared service organization – quote from the Budget.

I ask the Premier: Is that a private company that he is talking about?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to work with her on that pointing thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, we went through a practice within the school boards that went through the organization of back office services, consolidation into one entity across all boards. That is what is happening here, Mr. Speaker, with the Department of Health and those regional health boards.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned in the Estimates Committee that World War I commemorations in Gallipoli will not include the installation of our iconic caribou because of budget cuts.

I would like the minister to explain.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the member would know, we had a great discussion about the Honour 100 this morning in Estimates. The member took the opportunity to share his personal views on the importance of the initiative and what it means for Newfoundland and Labrador to recognize those

events, and it is why our government established the Honour 100, because we recognize the importance of that part in our history. We are committed to recognizing it with a plaque, among a number of other things, Mr. Speaker, but it is correct that there will not be a caribou.

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, we lost thirty Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in direct battle, and ten by disease.

I ask the minister again, this seemed to be an insignificant amount when it comes to Newfoundland and Labrador revenue, when it comes to the sacrifice that our soldiers made.

So I will ask the minister again: Will he institute the money back into the budget again and put a caribou up where it belongs as a memorial?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, as I said a few moments ago, we share the view of the member in terms of the importance of Honour 100 and recognizing that part of the history of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why we have invested more than \$3 million in activities and events to commemorate the Honour 100, including a delegation that will be going to Beaumont Hamel this year in late June. It includes taking veterans, legionnaires, members of the community, and for the first time a number of student ambassadors from across the Province, because we recognize the importance of getting the message out.

I fully appreciate the member's perspective on wanting a monument, but there are many other things we have to focus on as well as part of remembering the legacy of Honour 100, and Beaumont Hamel, and all of the other events that occurred in history around that event.

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.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move the following private member's resolution. I give notice that this will be the resolution for Wednesday, as seconded by the Member for Kilbride:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the Province's new arrangement with municipalities which provide sustainable sources of funding to further ensure a strong future for our municipalities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that the motion just presented by the hon. member will be the private member's resolution that government will debate this coming Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the Energy Plan Progress Report for 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

With leave, tabling of documents.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the speed limit is 100 kilometres an hour on Veterans Memorial Highway; and

WHEREAS traffic entering and exiting Veterans Memorial Highway is often heavy at Jamie's Way intersection; and

WHEREAS because of the heavy traffic turning left onto Jamie's Way, having to cross traffic that is travelling at 100 kilometres an hour and higher, creating potential for a serious accident;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reduce the speed limit on Veterans Memorial Highway in the area of Jamie's Way to seventy kilometres an hour.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition I am after bringing here quite often. Of course, I spoke to the Minister of Transportation on it. He was going to get it checked into. I do appreciate the minister saying that, but I have to continue to bring the petition here to make sure that it is looked at. We certainly do not want to see anybody getting killed in that area, or anywhere on our highways in Newfoundland and Labrador, if we can do something to avoid that situation.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time. I will sit down now and we will see.

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

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

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

WHEREAS privatized nursing homes lower operating costs by paying lower wages, de-unionizing, laying people off, and cutting staff in these facilities; and

WHEREAS studies have established that for-profit nursing homes are associated with lower quality of services and poorer resident health outcomes, including an increased risk of hospitalization; and

WHEREAS Auditors General of the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario have reported that P3s cost taxpayers more;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately stop the privatization of long-term care.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased to stand here today to present this petition on behalf of those who have signed it, people from St. John's, Paradise, Corner Brook, Mount Pearl, Portugal Cove, Burin Bay Arm, Twillingate, from various parts of the Province who are quite concerned by the announcement made by this government in its Budget with regard to privatization of long-term care.

Privatizing long-term care has been shown to have negative impacts throughout this country. Other provinces who turn to privatizing long-term care long before we have are now showing that reducing cost is not what happens with long-term care. What happens is a reduction of services for the people.

When it comes to capital costs, and the government here thinks it is going to save money on capital costs but the Auditors General of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario have reported that P3s are actually

costing taxpayers more because of the high cost of borrowing for the private sector and the need to build in profits. It seems this government does not read what is happening in other parts of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

It is true that private for profit companies operating long-term care homes can reduce operating costs but they do it by lowering the cost of labour, as the petition says by de-unionizing, lowering wages and benefits, cutting staff, and multi-tasking staff which increases workloads.

Mr. Speaker this government has maintained responsibility for our long-term care which has always been part of our health care system. It is the expectation of the people in our Province, as is evidenced by this petition that long-term care remain under our government as part of our long-term health care.

Thank you very much, 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is the spring of 2015, I have been standing and bringing this petition forward since the fall of 2013. The road continues to worsen in condition. Last week, I heard there were seven tractor-trailer loads of cold patch that was used on this stretch of road last year.

Mr. Speaker, pavement almost forty years old is a safety hazard to the travelling public. It is a death trap, huge holes, and sharp jagged ends. Vehicles continue to be damaged on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, I think about the children who are bused. I think about the people who are transported by ambulance that have to pull in on private property of businesses.

Just this weekend again, Mr. Speaker, I drove down over it. I am very surprised there has not been an accident, that there is not someone killed, especially driving it after dark because during the day you are constantly manoeuvring around this.

I will continue to call on government to have a look at this, to address this very, very serious, badly damaged, old, dilapidated, long expired stretch of pavement in the Labrador Straits, L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall, I presented this petition on a number of occasions, probably a few dozen occasions. One thing which is really interesting about this petition is who signed it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the Town of Trout River there are three or four places, public businesses, where a petition is displayed and people who visit, if they can read the petition and they can sign the petition –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, nobody from the Town of Trout River signed this petition. That is not to say it was not signed in Trout River. It was signed by people from Pasadena. It was signed by people from Corner Brook. It was signed by people from Woody Point. It was signed by people from Summerford. It was signed by people from Twillingate.

Mr. Speaker, there are people from five separate communities throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who, within the past year, have been in the Town of Trout River unable to use cellphones who signed this petition. This is not asking the government to spend public dollars even to install cellphone service. This simply asks that the government partner with the private sector to see if there is a possibility to work out some type of an arrangement, to collaborate with or to partner with the private sector in order to extend cellphone coverage, which is badly needed in this important park enclave community.

Mr. Speaker, the tourist season is upon us again and people will continually flock to Gros Morne National Park and to the Town of Trout River. They will continually be presented with an opportunity to sign this petition. They will marvel that in a national park such as Gros Morne National Park and in such a picturesque community as Trout River that there is no cellphone service.

Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a petition requesting that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador partner with the private sector to extend cellphone service through Gros Morne National Park and the Town of Trout River.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

We will be debating Motion 1, the Budget Speech.

I recognize the Member for Bonavista North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess when we all stand we pretty well refer to our districts as the place that gives us some inspiration and support to talk about the different topics we come to our feet to talk about in this House. Every time I speak, I hope that at some point I do have one unique piece of information to offer. In doing so, then we make the best possible debate for the entire Province that we can.

In speaking to the Budget today, before I get started I just need to recognize – a few days ago on a member's statement I recognized a lady from Trinity who had contributed thirty years to the cadet movement in her town. This past weekend, we had the annual ceremonial review on Saturday. There is another one coming up in a couple of days. I just want to recognize the whole movement of the cadets and the contribution they make to the youth in our communities, and how some of these youth become leaders. One person who joined the cadet movement as a twelve-year old in Trinity, in Indian Bay Air Cadets is now the leader of that cadet movement.

The same thing is happening in New-Wes-Valley, Mr. Speaker, with the Lions army cadets that are sponsored there. We are home-growing some of our talent. The commanding officer there now is a graduate of that program from many years ago. They started off as twelve-year olds in a very strong movement. I would just like to make an offer to commend that movement and the people involved in it today.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I will draw my comments back towards the events that have happened recently. A couple of short weeks ago we had a Budget presentation presented in the House, but this Budget that was presented by the minister here that took about an hour and forty-five minutes to deliver by means previous to that is probably leading back to many, many months of activity. Even some of the concepts or some of the ideas in this Budget go back years because it is how we react from one year to the next, to circumstances we are placed in, that we actually make a plan when we plan for our future.

We do not look just to one year in a Budget. That is the change of what we see in many of the recent Budgets that have been addressing the needs of the citizens in our Province. We cannot, we must not, look at a single year in isolation as to how we speak to the future of our Province. We cannot just say what is going to happen in the next year and put everything into the basket of the next year, because it is the reaction to this and the other things that happen over the next year or two that will lead into a further refining of that plan. So the plan gets refined every single year, Mr. Speaker.

If we are not open to that point of making changes and adjustments – and in some cases doing do overs, periodically sometimes, then you have to be human in this. You have to accept your mistakes if you make them and you have to move forward. We are all here for the best interest of the people and the citizens of this great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. If we do not stand united in some ways to say that is what we are here for, we may disagree on how to get there on both sides of this House, but again, we have to respect each other in the comments that we offer to each other. Along that line we develop the best possible plan, and it is through this process.

I referred to the minister laying out a plan three weeks ago, and the many, many hours of preparation that goes into this. Now, the Opposition might say the public consultations are for show, but there are some people who attend these sessions, Mr. Speaker, in all parts of the Province where they are invited. This year, they went to some new locations because people requested: Well, why don't you come to my town? I understand this year they were in Bay Roberts for the first time. There was request put in for them to visit New-Wes-Valley; maybe next year New-Wes-Valley may be a location that this consultation process may arrive.

The people who make these comments, they come with legitimate concerns and we address these and bring back a response to these. The Budget is a reaction to the economic conditions. If times are great, it is easy to produce a Budget that has a lot of expenditure in it because there is a lot of natural income there; but if you move to a challenged time, then in that time you have to react differently. You cannot continue to spend,

spend, spend, or it will catch up with you. You cannot continue every year to borrow, borrow, borrow.

If you look at the number of years that – before I take that thought further, the previous Minister of Finance, former Premier, who sat in this chair that is just ahead of me here, Mr. Speaker, he would stand up and say you cut your garment to the cloth you have. Well, some years, you have plenty of cloth and you can cut your garment to that cloth and you can have many, many more expenditures. Some years, like this year, in order to have a cloth big enough to fit the garment, we have to go borrow.

That has not been done on a repetitive basis, Mr. Speaker; in fact, over the last ten years there were seven years where we did not need to borrow. We did not need to borrow to meet our investments into the future, or to meet the needs that we have from one year to the next. This current year and for the plan for the next two to three to four years, we need to have a plan of borrowing in order to do the work or to make the balanced choices that this Province needs.

That is the theme of this year's Budget; Balancing Choices for a Promising Future seems to fit. The theme of this gets us to the point that we understand that certain choices have to be made. If we go all in one direction, then that leads us down a different path. If we go off in another direction, we are led down a different path. If we pick what we consider the most strategic routes to go, then our path changes and it becomes a little more prosperous towards the future.

Through that, Mr. Speaker, we know that we are facing this unpredictable decline – everybody has referred to it. Lots of people have referred to the unpredictable decline in our oil. Now, we have used our oil in the last ten to twelve to fourteen years to strengthen our economy, to bolster our infrastructure, \$6 billion wide across our Province in the last decade or so to the point that we have a Province that has a fairly strong basis right now.

We did that without the borrowing, Mr. Speaker. So to continue some projects in the next two to three years, if we have to borrow to keep our activities going – because you cannot just shut

everything down and say no, four rough years ahead, shut her down, bar up the doors, stay away from borrowing, do not go to the banks, do not go to any of these locations, Mr. Speaker, then the bottom will fall out of her altogether. We have to have some strategic responses to this volatile commodity that we deal with.

We have always been a commodity-driven environment, Mr. Speaker. When John Cabot came here and we got the fish that is a commodity. How many years did our forefathers depend on that commodity to strengthen it, the strength of it. When there are all kinds of stocks out there, it is easy to get fish and it is easy to make a living. When the stocks dwindle, it is like our economy – or the financial abilities we have right now, if our financial ability dwindles a little bit we have to investigate and gather other ways to go look for the choices or the things that we need to make for a better future.

When our cod collapsed, we went to the crab. Right now, we are looking at some sort of cyclical decline in the crab, or the cod is returning because we have not been fishing it, then we change our direction based on what is around us and what area we can steer forward through. So, we adjust our course and we stay steady for the future.

This volatility is not unique, Mr. Speaker, to Newfoundland and Labrador. Economies worldwide – three or four of the other economies in our country that we are in competition with as one of the leaders in our country all face the same problems at this time. The drop is something that just could not be predicted. In reaction to it, we have to change our course; we have to adjust. Don't throw it all down and get so depressed by the situation you find yourself in that you break down or you say she is gone boy, she is gone. This is not the time to be there. This is a time to take a measured approach, Mr. Speaker, to take a balanced approach, to make these choices that we talk about and move forward.

You think about a family – and the Member for Cape St. Francis alluded to this a couple of days ago when he did his Budget Speech. He said when you take this analogy, if you look at the situation we are in and you think about your

family, at times you have choices to make. Well, at times we think we all need to save money for the future. There are times when you just do not have that money to put into a future savings, or a pension plan, or whatever, so you have to look at the income you have and make choices. If you cannot do with what you have, then you may have to look for other sources to bolster that income. Sometimes in a family that might mean taking on an extra job that gives you the extra income.

The Member for Virginia Waters alluded to the other day, increasing your market share. Well I do not know what that would do, but if someone had the ability to create an extra job, you might be able to. As a Province, we probably do not have that luxury, so the analogy is not totally intact.

The other thing you do is when you run into a place that your car is broken down or you have troubles with your house, you need your shelter or you need your transportation abilities, then even as a family you go outside of that to other institutions and you borrow to increase what you have to be able to make it through to the future. There are times that you do that.

There are also times that you are paying down these loans. There are times when prosperity turns around and your income sources increase in your family, and you pay down your loans or your mortgages faster than you can in the challenged times. There are other times, Mr. Speaker, that you put a little bit aside for the future. You get that little bit extra.

If you are into a forced pension plan where you make payments because of the career choice you have made, then you have your pension plan for the future. If you are not lucky enough to be in these types of situations and you have to plan for your own future – that is pretty much how our Province is going – then what you have to do is when the times are right, you can put things aside.

Really if you look at all of that, Mr. Speaker, you can almost take that little analogy and you could combine it and connect it with the eight long-term principles. Now we can debate whether they are a principle or not, but we can look at it that there are tenets, or they are

guiding stars, or they are something that you watch as you go through. Pretty much how this Budget is based on that gives us a similar type of plan as you would find in your own home.

In the next few minutes I want to sort of look at that issue and look at these eight principles. This is not the direction I had planned to go when I stood up. So in my next turn, I might talk a little bit more about how it compares to the district. Right now I have sort of gone this way so I will continue on with it.

These eight long-term principles, we are going to cultivate the culture of cost management.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. CROSS: It is all a joke. It is all a big joke.

We are going to look at that over the next few years. We are not going to be unleashing a series of all kinds of radical cost-reduction measures. We are not going to look at a panic attack and address this. We have to look at overhauling the whole program that we have.

I am choosing some of the phrases that the minister used in his Budget to sort of address this. We are going to look at this and how we can contain this and keep fiscal management a high priority over the next few years.

It is pretty much the same as you would do in your house. Every member here has a household budget and when we look at what we are doing, we have to, in our own homes, cultivate that culture of cost management. If it works in our homes and we can take that attitude, then it should work for us on a much larger basis.

Another thing that most of us, if we look at our homes, are really happy with or we really want to promote and sustain as we go forward is we want to sustain our health or our vitality as we go forward. In doing so, we need to look at a way that we can address this issue that, again, balances the choices we have to make and takes us off in that different direction towards the future.

Currently, the way this approach is taking for health sustainability – one aspect of it is we are

going to combine some of the similar activities that are happening in the four health care boards and the back office operations that are happening there, that happens in all four, to reduce duplication, or quadruplicating in this case. Then we are going to put some of these measures together and operate them out of the same function. In doing so, it enables a savings in administration and administrative-type resources.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, if we are in our families and we look towards the future, we think about how – if you offer your children or your child is here and they are trying to decide which way to go for the future, they have to match their education with the reality of what is out there. It is useless to go train to be a moon lander if there are no moon landings happening; but if you do need oil drillers, then you access what is there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: In our approach as a government, Mr. Speaker, individuals in their household cannot control that, but the government of the Province can to the point that they can institute plans that the education system fits the needs of the community. We have been talking about that for years, we can talk about it forever, because it has always got to be that way.

Currently, we need it to be more of an acute need for us over the next few years. We have to adjust our education system to match the needs of our communities.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) moon landing.

MR. CROSS: If we ever do need that moon landing, we have someone prepared for it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: At this point I suggest there would be many of us here that could jump to go in orbit at any time.

Another one of these principles – and I am half way through them, but my time is going to

expire probably before I get all the way through – is the development of the attrition plan. Again, as an approach to –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. CROSS: I see must have tickled the fancy of someone across there.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. CROSS: Oh, absolutely – absolutely.

Through the attrition plan what do we plan to do to address the rightsizing or the changing of our civil service to make it fit for the future? Do we have a panic attack and say we have a lot of individuals who have to go and then, when we do, all of our younger employees with student loans and all kinds of other issues on the go are very nervous then about their employment? You take that vein, like we have sometimes before, and what happens is we lose a lot of the bright training that we have created.

In this case, as a way of rightsizing our civil service, our Premier and our Minister of Finance has sort of devised a plan for us whereby we will remove people when they retire. So, people make the personal choice, I am going to leave the civil service, I am going to retire, I have served my time; and for every ten of these retirements if you are only going to hire back eight but strategically look at how this impacts on your whole organization, then what happens is everyone has felt useful, they have had an entire career to contribute to our Province, and then the younger ones who are getting into the system are being able to be stabilized and say I have my job, I have not got the risk I am going to lose it this year or next year, and I can look ahead.

So, these young people can make plans for their future and not be worried about do I have a job, don't I have a job, and that is a very stressful situation to be in. We have all been there because all of us have had our time in the labour force or in the workforce throughout our Province. We have all gone through times when who gets laid off when times are bad? The person with the lowest amount of experience, the person who has the hardest chance to

succeed in the future if they lose what basis of income they have.

Mr. Speaker, the attrition plan we look at is a way of saying to these younger people hold in there, things are leveling off, things are going to be better for the future and you will have a better life.

I see I only have ten seconds left. I have another two hours of material, so I will be back again.

I thank you for your time today, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess like everybody in this hon. House I will stand up and say that I am glad to stand on my feet and represent the great District of Torngat Mountains. Let me tell you about Torngat Mountains, Mr. Speaker. I am sure everybody knows it is by far the largest district in the Province. You can actually take the whole Island of Newfoundland and fit it into my district and you would have some space left over.

I think when I drive around the Avalon Peninsula I go through fourteen districts in about twenty minutes. Back home, it takes me two hours to drive to the closest community.

MS DEMPSTER: On your Ski-Doo.

MR. EDMUNDS: By snowmobile, yes.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I listened to the Member for Bonavista North; the member came into this House of Assembly I think the same time I did in October, 2011. When I hear him talk about not having to borrow for seven years and it is time to get away from that, to borrow, because of hard times and the cloth is not big enough. I know he is relatively new, the same as I am, but the party that he represents has been there for twelve years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: Not only that, Mr. Speaker, I think there was \$20 billion in oil revenue, \$5 billion from the Atlantic Accord; \$25 billion from those two alone – \$25 billion. Now, what are we doing? We are looking at borrowing \$4 billion over the next four years. Sometimes a little bit of homework can go a long way. The common terminology back then was spend like drunken sailors. Now we are seeing the proof. The people of the Province are the ones who are going to have to pay for this, Mr. Speaker, everyone.

I heard the member talk about your priorities, shelter and transportation. If you look at all the districts in the Province, that is true, shelter and transportation. I just asked the Minister of Transportation and Works about airport landing fees, Mr. Speaker – transportation. That cost just went up. We love to take care of transportation too, but the minister has made it all of a sudden very much more difficult. With the outside world now, the only connection in my district is by airplane.

We talk about summer transportation. I look at the ferries that are coming into play, and the ones that are already here, *Hazel McIssac* and *Grace Sparkes*. I look at the ones that are coming; I think it is the *MV Veteran* and the *MV Legionnaire*, and all deserved and all needed. You can look at transportation in Labrador. We can look at the RFPs, and guess what? They are not even on the table anymore. They have been pulled off the table.

The whole reason for the new ferry system was because the ferry system that is in existence now is outdated, it is obsolete, and it is costing the taxpayers more and more money to run. When you have machinery for X number of years, it tends to wear out and it has to be replaced, otherwise the breakdowns will continue and continue and continue. Certainly we have seen this with the *Apollo*, with the *Astron*, and with the *Northern Ranger*. It is the reason why the fleet is being replaced in some parts of the Province. I have to say that, Mr. Speaker, in some parts of the Province.

Just a few comments there, and certainly I would like to talk about some items in this year's Budget, Mr. Speaker. You are going to a lock down or Budget lock down, and when you do

get a chance to review the Budget your first order of business I guess is to look at your critic areas. As the critic for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, you look at what the Budget impacts will be for Labrador and for the Aboriginal communities in our Province. There is always a look at how your own district would benefit.

I would like to go back to last year just for a second, Mr. Speaker, in relevance to how this government operates. I want to look at firefighting and emergency equipment that the government announced last year, starting in June, 2014, right up until, I think it was November 2014. I counted fifteen vehicles, pump rescue trucks, fire trucks if it could be very general. You look at where those trucks were awarded it almost made you think that last year was going to be an election year.

I remember a letter, Mr. Speaker, I think it was in July or maybe early August, that was sent from the Minister of Municipal Affairs at the time to the community of Nain saying your request for a fire emergency vehicle has not been accepted at this time because of the fact that the funding has already been disbursed in this category. The funding had already been disbursed and there was no funding left. Well, guess what, Mr. Speaker? They announced seven fire trucks after that. They announced seven more after that. After one community was told there is no money left, they announced six more.

This is how this government operates, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, you can understand why we are probably in the predicament we are now when you look at mismanagement and having spent like drunken sailors, I think was the term I used earlier, and it is one that has been used over and over. Now that they have pretty much blown the \$25 billion, they are looking to the taxpayers, the hard working people of this Province to cover their mistakes, increasing the tax.

I would like to go back to some of the programs, some of the announcements in the Budget. I would like to talk a little bit about the social programs that have come forward. I will give credit where credit is due, when you look at the issues that surround communities like Natuashish and some of the communities in my

district where there is a need to address the social issues. The creation of six additional front line Child, Youth and Family Services positions, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a good move, and the continued support of the social worker rotation program in Natuashish.

I remember when the Premier was the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, we talked about introducing this program where there would be mentorship from experienced social workers to some of the new social workers who would be coming online and how people had high hopes for this program. It is by far one of the most successful programs. Is it the end solution? No, it is probably not, but it is certainly one that gives you forward movement and one we would like to see continued.

The announcement of funds towards a domestic violence court in Labrador is something I have advocated for since I became elected in this hon. House, is the need for justice in Labrador because when you look at the number of cases, some of them were violent crimes where acquittal was probably a common term. It was causing everyone to believe the justice system, whether it be in Labrador or anywhere else, was failing. It was failing the people. It was failing the victims.

I just saw recently the minister had announced, I think three new positions in the Crown Attorney's office in Goose Bay. The court circuit in Goose Bay does not just serve the community of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Court circuits go up the North Coast. They take in the Northwest River and Sheshatshiu, and they go down to the South Coast. It is actually the second busiest court in the Province, Mr. Speaker, second only to the City of St. John's and surrounding areas.

So there was a need to bring justice back – effective justice, if I could be so bold as to say that, Mr. Speaker. I think we have to wait and see how effective these programs will be. I think if you deal with the social issues, it will certainly have an impact in the justice system. Hopefully we can get a lot of our people into social programming that would help them stay off the court docket and things like that.

Mr. Speaker, I saw that there was a half million dollar announcement to establish a new oncology suite at the Lab West Health Centre to provide a better setting for those families who have to undertake chemotherapy treatment. Certainly, we welcome that.

I would like to talk about Labrador West, Mr. Speaker, just for a few minutes. When I looked at the Budget and I looked at the situation in Labrador West, needless to say I was a bit disappointed in what was being offered to offset some of the issues and some of the major concerns they have in Lab West. The iron ore mines in Labrador West and the people who work in the Towns of Lab City and Wabush, no doubt, have been made contributors to the provincial economy since the mines started up in 1964 I think it was.

So they have been contributing to our economy ever since the 1960s. The communities in Labrador West are totally dependent on the iron ore industry. In any mining industry in the long term, you will see a series of booms and busts, and the certainly the people of Lab City and the people of Wabush have been no exception. A couple of years ago we saw probably one of the biggest booms that Labrador West ever experienced. It caused the inflation rate to go way up in that area of our Province, and then it all changed overnight. We have gone into a bust situation now, Mr. Speaker, but the difference is, this time, it has been a bust like the region has never, ever seen before.

Right now you are seeing initially 450 people out of work. You are seeing the Wabush Mines shut down. I think last report there were five people working there. They have gone into permanent shutdown. The Town of Wabush is feeling the loss of this main player, Mr. Speaker, because they have gone into EI contributions, but now that is starting to run out. There is only a caretaking capacity going on there and a lot of these people are left without employment.

It has received three-year funding to compensate the loss to their grant in lieu, but in just a matter of time this is going to run out and this is going to mean a loss of \$2 million to their annual budget, and that is certainly going to be devastating.

Iron ore mines continue to employ people but they have had cutbacks. All indicators are that although we hope for the industry to pick up – and more than likely it will pick up. When you are coming off of a boom such as Lab West had two years ago, you have people buying into mortgages at high rates, very high rates, and once you get into layoffs and the industry crashes if you look at the budget for a region that has carried the Province, no doubt, at different times over the last fifty or sixty years, there has been very little put in place in this year's Budget to help offset some of the major issues that Lab West has been experiencing.

Certainly we would look for at least some statement by this government or some means of contributing to that economy to carry them past this recent bust situation until the market takes an upturn. We certainly look forward to that and certainly hope that there is some initiative taken to help those people out.

I would like to talk about the PCB situation in Hopedale, Mr. Speaker. I know this has been an ongoing commitment by the government, whether it is through provincial coffers or through the compensation that was put in trust by the American air force who were the cause of a lot of these problems. I think there has been \$1.1 million to continue with the second phase of remediation.

Having grown up in Hopedale, Mr. Speaker, and going back and monitoring in person on site the PCB cleanup over the last three or four years, the concern that I have – even though it has never been proven and from knowing pretty much everyone in the District of Torngat Mountains – is the alarming cancer rate in Hopedale, when you compare it to other communities in Nunatsiavut. It seems to be marginally higher. As you follow the cleanup and you look at the contamination in the community, it is hard to pinpoint the different areas. There are actually houses that have been built on contaminated sites. It is good to see a commitment to help clean up those sites.

The biggest concern that I have – and this is from, like I said, monitoring the site on the ground – is that the more they look, the more they find. If you look at the contaminants that came out just last summer alone, Mr. Speaker,

that tested positive for PCBs, this was smack in the middle of a community, through leakage, and through contaminated waste sites that the American air force used in Hopedale. It is certainly good to see that there is a continued commitment.

I would like to talk a little bit about the housing program very quickly, Mr. Speaker. I know that I have more issues to bring up and I will go into more detail on some of the other issues. I would like to talk about \$250,000 to the Provincial Home Repair Program. It is a wonderful program. I did speak to the former minister responsible for Housing, the Member for Harbour Main two years ago.

The problem is with the guidelines where there is a cap. As you go north, the cost of materials increases. If you have a \$7,000 cap on an application and your material costs \$5,000, then you get roughly one-quarter of what you would get anywhere else in the Province. It just does not give you any excess funds to get the job done, in terms of carpentry work, Mr. Speaker, if you are not going to be able to do that yourself.

Those are just a few issues that I would like to bring forward, and certainly I will have time over the next debate slots to have a more issues to bring forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): The hon. the Member for Bonavista South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted to be able to speak on Budget 2015. Budget 2015 is all about Balancing Choices for a Promising Future for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I will talk about some of the positive announcements that were made in Budget 2015. There were a fair number of positive announcements over the last ten years that led up to Budget 2015. As a matter of fact, there

was actually a \$6 billion investment over the last ten years in infrastructure alone; infrastructure that included renovations to schools, to health care facilities, to upgrades to roads, and enhanced municipal infrastructure.

I would like to talk about how some of the infrastructure programs tied into my district, the District of Bonavista South. In health care alone, in the last number of years this government, that I am part of, actually invested major funding into health care, into a new bungalow style community residence that is up and running for the people on the Bonavista Peninsula. A project that cost \$2.6 million, a project that is valued by our seniors, by employees who work in that particular facility, and by all people in the region of the Bonavista Peninsula. This government committed to putting that particular building in place. It is open, and it is open to the people on the Bonavista Peninsula which was a great investment.

Also, in addition to that particular announcement is dialysis. This government has shown time after time, in all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador, how we continually invested in dialysis services throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, a service that could be brought closer to the homes of dialysis patients. An investment that was very important to all people on dialysis throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LITTLE: Dialysis services are actually up and running in the Bonavista Health Care Community Centre in Bonavista and serves the region of the Bonavista Peninsula. That was another announcement that was made in the last ten years by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I often wonder when I listen to the Opposition and I hear some comments in relation to we mismanaged, we overspent and so forth, but health care is a number one priority to all of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador. I have heard that over and over and over, Mr. Speaker. I would like to know what the Opposition would have done differently in the Budget we actually

outlined this year, a Budget that is a very promising Budget for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. I would like to have known what decisions the Opposition would have made.

If you look at the track record of this government and look how we used a balanced approach in relation to negotiating collective agreements for public sector employees. You look at the pension reform and how our government took a leadership role in finding a solution to the liability associated with the pension benefits that would have severely impacted the Province's net debt.

Over the last few years government has worked with the public sector unions to formalize agreements that protected the Defined Benefit Plan for approximately 97 per cent of the plan members, including retirees. We work well as a government to address the remaining unfunded pension liability. We will continue to work on that particular issue.

I would like to go back, because I used to be a public sector employee back in the 1990s. I remember at that time there was a 20 per cent decrease. Now, that is not compounded because if you compound that, that would be upwards towards 22 per cent, 23 per cent. It was taken away with one stroke of the pen by a Liberal government. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker.

People in the public service are still impacted by that one decision which was made by the Liberal government of that day. Our government continually works in a balanced approach with the unions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LITTLE: We have a proven track record, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work in the future and find balanced agreements. That is where we are as a government.

In this Budget, we do have a five-year plan. We outlined the five-year plan, Mr. Speaker, and that plan will certainly help us through a difficult time. We realize that not only our Province, other provinces around the country

and other countries are faced in relation to a decline in oil prices that drives the economy and the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We had to face reality and make some decisions, but they were balanced decisions, Mr. Speaker, that will allow us as a government, and allow our people and future generations to prosper as a Province. We did not panic as a government. We actually came up with a balanced approach to the economic realities of today. We outlined a strategic plan leading into the next five years, rather than come out with a one-year Budget that could have really been sort of disastrous to a degree.

We did not panic. We outlined a Budget that will take us into five years with a balanced approach. That is what this government is all about, showing strong leadership to take us into the future, Mr. Speaker.

There were some concerns. There were concerns coming from municipalities, Mr. Speaker. I used to be a councillor in the Town of Bonavista.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I know how challenging they can be, but under the leadership of Municipal Affairs and the great department – look at what they outlined in this Budget, Mr. Speaker, a Community Sustainability Partnership plan. A plan where I actually attended a media release, and at that media release the President of MNL attended that press release and was certainly delighted in hearing the news with regard to that announcement that day. Four out of five requests coming from Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador were announced that day; a very positive announcement.

This government is working in partnership with different levels of government and different organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. To be able to come out with an announcement of \$46 million over three years and to actually agree to four out of five recommendations coming from Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, what an accomplishment, Mr. Speaker. What a balanced approach.

This government is all about leadership. This government is all about listening to communities all around Newfoundland and Labrador.

In my particular District of Bonavista South, when you look at some of the MCWs that were proposed in the last number of years and on a continued basis with regard to improvements to infrastructure, water and sewer infrastructure, improvements to all types of infrastructure, road improvements, this government on this side of the House continually works with municipalities all over Newfoundland and Labrador.

In my district, Mr. Speaker, the mayors of the towns in Bonavista South are certainly grateful and commend the work that this government does on a regular basis. As a matter of fact, just last week the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development came to the Town of Bonavista. Sometimes it is a tongue ‘tangler,’ and I said that at the meeting as a matter of fact.

We had a great meeting with the public. People from all different organizations came out and commended our government in relation to reaching partnerships with different organizations and reaching partnerships with the federal government. The business community came out to that big announcement, that big event. This government will continue to work in partnerships with communities, community organizations, and community councils in the future. This government is all about actually balancing our approach. We do promise a bright future for our people, for our children, and their children, Mr. Speaker.

We decided not to go and borrow, borrow, borrow. We decided to have a balanced approach, Mr. Speaker, leading into the future to give people the opportunity in our Province to be able to continue to work in some of the major projects that are around our Province right now.

From the District of Bonavista South there are people working at Long Harbour, Bull Arm, offshore oil, and the Muskrat Falls Project. This government made it clear the Muskrat Falls Project will continue. It will continue, and that is in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker. In the future, I am hopeful and I believe that we will see another

major development in Labrador – a development, the Gull Island Project. That is what this government believes in, Mr. Speaker, a government that has vision, that has a plan, that will speak on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will make a difference leading into the future.

When you look at agriculture and agrifoods, 6,500 people employed in Newfoundland and Labrador at \$500 million annual sales – half a billion dollars in annual sales coming from that one particular sector, Mr. Speaker. This government invested \$12 million in Budget 2015. What an accomplishment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: When you look at the business sector, \$200 million for business to diversify and to be globally competitive. What an investment, \$200 million; \$102 million in business tax credits; \$44 million business and regional development; and \$1 million in a new digital media tax credit. That is in business alone, Mr. Speaker, but what an accomplishment.

Our government has invested heavily in infrastructure investments; Transportation and Works, \$317.9 million; a K-12 system, \$95 million; in health care, \$133.7 million; and in Municipal Affairs, \$118.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the total of those investments you are talking billions and billions and billions of dollars. This government is committed to the families and communities in this Province. We, as a government, do have a plan to have a heritage fund in 2019. Our economy will rebound; we are going to be okay, Mr. Speaker.

Under the leadership of our new Premier, we will be okay. We have a great leader. We are very optimistic. There will be tremendous opportunities in this Province under the leadership of our new Premier and we will be all right. We will have a bright future, and we will continue to act on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve a clear plan, a plan that this government has outlined over and over and over. We do

know, as a government, where we are headed. We are headed for prosperity, optimism, on this side of the House. We will lead the economy into the future. We will be one of the greatest provinces in this country of Canada because we believe by being optimistic and being positive, we can make a difference for our people leading into the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: We are not talking about borrowing, borrowing, and borrowing. We do have a balanced approach, and we are letting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know exactly what our plan is. The people are starting to realize and believe that we are honest, upfront, and we do have a vision and a plan leading into the future, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: It is important to all the people to have a choice. They are going to make a choice, Mr. Speaker. Most people will realize that that choice is very important leading into the future. A choice of optimism, a choice for a government that will lead us into the next number of years who will definitely promote this Province through other countries all around the world.

Looking at our growing tourism industry, over \$1 billion industry, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: – an industry that continues to grow, to grow because this government has invested millions of dollars into the tourism industry. Everywhere I go, listening to people all over the world who come to the District of Bonavista South to visit and they leave with an appreciation and they always say we are coming back again. We are coming back to this beautiful Province. Why? Because this government invested in tourism ads, invested in infrastructure related to tourism, and this government will continue to invest in that particular part of our economy – an economy that is a growing economy

The tourism industry is very vibrant. We have other provinces around our country who are

looking at what we are doing as a Province, how great our Province is, Mr. Speaker; they believe in our Province. They are looking at our ads. They are actually using our ads in other provinces. Why? Because our ads are positive, our advertising is positive, and they can see. They have vision and they understand where our Province is. I tell you what; we are going to stay optimistic on this side of the House. We are going to stay optimistic. We do have a plan, we do have a vision, and we will continue on, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I feel very optimistic here today being able to speak in this House of Assembly on behalf of the people of Bonavista South, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We do have a vision that will lead us into the future, Mr. Speaker, a vision that will bring wealth to this Province. This government is a good government. I am delighted to be part of this government. This government has great leaders on this side of the House and a great leader in our Premier.

We have a vision for tomorrow, for the future, and beyond the future. We will continue to work hard on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will definitely continue to work hard. We will listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will collaborate with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as we have done in the past, and we will continue to make sure our economy grows and grows and grows, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: If that is this government's plan A, we are all waiting in apprehension to see what plan B is going to be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to bring up a very important matter to this House of Assembly for their consideration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: It is disturbing to me that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to bring this up as a prelude to the chat that we will have about the Budget. There was a very important component to the Budget that I think this House should reconsider, that the government should reconsider. The simple matter dealt with this morning in the House in Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development had to do with the special celebrations and events in your Budget book.

In the Budget book they talked about a line item that showed a pretty heavy cut to the World War I celebrations; in particular, a cut to the installation of, in my mind, a very important monument, that of another caribou to be installed in the area of Gallipoli. We have other monuments around. We have, of course, the caribou monument in Bowring Park here in the city, which is a centre of pride and a centre of remembrance for this Province. We also have memorials in Courtrai in Belgium and another four in France.

I feel that it does not matter the reason, this Budget allotment should have been left as is,

supposing it takes forever to get this memorial in place. To see the money was actually taken away by government – we know the boys who made the ultimate sacrifice are still going to be remembered there in the form of a plaque. As far as I am concerned a plaque is not going all the way like we should be, like they did for us all those years ago in 1915.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make note of that first. I am hoping government is going to reverse this decision that is made in this Budget when it comes to this particularly sensitive – at least for me, very sensitive item that is in the Budget document itself. I will leave that with you.

We have other items that would immortalize our people in our minds and ingrain them in our history. I know that they are now, but the installation of a memorial in another place where such fine Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – not only did they help build this Province, it is one of the reasons why we are here in this House, Mr. Speaker. They were fighting an enemy and they did it for us.

Mr. Speaker, I take pride today in standing up in this House and addressing this Budget. I wanted to leave that thought with the government that I think they should reverse the decision on the allotments of money, and put the money back into the Budget to get this caribou installed as a living testament to the sacrifice of those who have fallen before us.

Courtrai, Beaumont Hamel, Monchy-le-Preux, Gueudecourt, and Masnières are all in France, except for Courtrai in Belgium. Of course, Bowering Park is where these memorials have been placed. Hopefully, one of these days we are going to see that same likeness put up in Gallipoli, just up the shore from Kangaroo Beach and Suvla Bay, and we will have Newfoundlanders and Labradorians immortalized again.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to address the Budget here too because I feel this Budget is one of lost opportunity. In the dying days of any Administration, I think we all have time to reflect. Hopefully, government will reflect on things that it did not do. At the same time, realizing the things that it has done and how it got here in the first place.

The first thing I will address is a couple of things I noticed in the Budget as well the other day, just to come to light on one particular item that was brought up. In the House on Thursday, I also talked about the cuts to Fire and Emergency Services, and the Member for Exploits did not know where they were coming from. Well, if he had read his Budget document, I will refer him to 18.20 of the Budget document that shows under Emergency Services, "... the Emergency Services Division including the development and maintenance of effective provincial emergency preparedness planning, response and recovery measures as well as planning and coordinating Federal, Provincial and Municipal resources to respond to large scale civil emergencies and disasters occurring in the Province."

The allotment for this particular department under Fire and Emergency Services, to let the Member for Exploits know, went from \$2.7 million down to \$646,000. So I just wanted to let him know on what page of the Budget document, because I guess he never read it, that this section came from, because he told me that I was misinformed.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not know unless the numbers are wrong – unless the Finance Minister has it wrong.

MR. FORSEY: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order, the hon. the Member for Exploits.

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

I was referring to the funding for fire trucks and equipment. The member for the fire and emergency services association of Newfoundland and Labrador stated that it stayed at the record high level of \$5 million.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MURPHY: Just to let the Member for Exploits know, I guess it shows that sometimes government does not listen because he was not

listening on that day either. I had referred to the Emergency Services section of the Budget, section 6.1.03 of the Budget documentation that the cut was from \$2.7 million down to \$646,000. That came as a direct response to the minister at the time when he made a minister's statement saying how the provincial government is going to be there. I merely asked a question, I tell the Member for Exploits, that if the funding was there – it would certainly show that if government was going to be responsive, the money would have been there in the Budget, but it was not. Anyway, I wanted to correct that record; that is number one.

Mr. Speaker, we are here in a situation and government tells us in the Budget documents that nobody can predict where the price of oil was going. I can think of a couple of places, a couple of different groups, besides myself, outside of myself, that made the prediction that there was a going to be a collapse in oil prices.

I can go back to April 2010 in *The Telegram* story where I made one prediction as regards to a price collapse in the price of oil. I can think of going back to 2012 when the Muskrat Falls debate came out, the PIRA estimates themselves talked about a low end point of oil where the possibility was there – albeit low, but still there. The possibility was there, I tell the government, that oil could be reaching \$50 a barrel.

Again, in the Muskrat Falls debate, and also in the Budget debate of 2012, we brought up the point by a gentleman by the name of Leonardo Maugeri who was head of an Italian oil corporation. There is no better man, I do not think, that would be in an oil company that would know about his own operations and about predicting the way that the price of oil is going to be. (Inaudible) said it himself. He is teaching down at the Harvard School of Economics, the Kennedy school, where he talked about a very good possibility of a collapse of the price of oil, down below \$75 a barrel; Leonardo Maugeri was his name. Anybody can google that report out there and find it online. It is very interesting reading because he comes out with some future possibilities.

Now, I am going to tell government what my synopsis is as regards to where the price of oil is going to be, Mr. Speaker. I see trouble again in

the future. I do; I see trouble again in the future. For the first two years, your guesses for oil are probably okay but, after that, the next three years that they are predicting where the price of oil is going to be going, anywhere past \$71 is going to be a mistake. I think it is going to be a mistake because the first thing that they have forgotten about is US domestic production.

Some of these members in our little hallway chats and everything have asked me themselves where I thought the price of oil was going to be going. That is all I can do, I tell you. That is all I can do is put out the sounding bells as regards to where the possibility of the price of a barrel of oil is going. I will tell you this; again, with the increase with the price of a barrel of oil over the last couple of days, what we have been noticing, the decline in the number of drilling rigs that have been parked is slowing.

I think everybody here would admit that. If the Minister of Natural Resources is watching that number – and I told him, keep an eye on that rig count number. In Canada, last week, zero – zero. Oil companies right now, especially the small producers, are looking at getting back into the business. If they are getting back into the business –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. MURPHY: Again, I tell the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, the Member for Terra Nova, there was a zero decline in the drop of rigs last week. They did not climb, they did not fall, but the number is zero. It is the first week of stability in this country in the drilling industry that they have seen in a long time.

So I warn government when it comes to your predictions in the future on oil, do not depend on them to be the exact ones. I know you have to do some budget figuring and you have to have some balance here, but it is a mistake – it is a mistake. The reason why is because as the price of a barrel of oil rises to the present level where it is to now, people are thinking on getting back in.

They are going to get back into the industry. They are going to start producing again. Mr. Speaker, right now down in the States – I will ask government this one. Maybe I should ask it

during Question Period, but I will tell government exactly what is happening down in the States right now. Right now there are 4,700 oil wells that are capped. All you have to do is turn on the spigot and out comes the oil. They are already done. They have already drilled. They are just waiting for the price to go up.

As soon as they turn it up –

AN HON. MEMBER: The price goes down.

MR. MURPHY: Exactly; the price is going to go down.

The more supply is going to end up out on the market when that price of oil goes up. It is already ready to go. There is 158 million barrels alone in floating storage right now just off the coast of some of the OPEC nations. That is the latest inventory that they have, 159 million barrels, enough to pick it up and add more glut out there onto the market.

I really caution government that they had better watch it, watch out for these numbers. Because if these numbers are going to fall off again, if the numbers for the barrel of oil are going to fall off again, your programming is completely out the window – your long-term programming is gone.

So, you have to be cautious, and that brings me to my second point, Mr. Speaker. Because outside the price of a barrel of oil, there are certain things that they did not do, that there was missed opportunities on the part of this government, and I am going to name a few.

I will name a few right now, and there are certain signs out there that show the government could have done better, got a better return on its investment, if you will, and return some taxation to government coffers at the same time, but they did not listen to us. They did not listen to anybody I do not think besides their own pointed direction, their own plan. They tell you sometimes that if you do not have any levity to change that plan, boy you can be in a helluva lot of trouble if you do not have a Plan B.

Mr. Speaker, I can talk about the shipbuilding industry and the lost opportunities in this Province, and what a shipbuilding industry means to the likes of British Columbia right now

or what it is going to mean to Nova Scotians in the future. They have succeeded in getting a thirty-year Olympic Games every year is what the former Premier of Nova Scotia said. It is like winning the Olympics, this one, except it is for thirty years.

We lost the shipbuilding industry here because the government has gone outside the country to get its ferries built. It failed to anchor its own tax base by having welders here and by having people submit the possibilities for contracts on something like that. Government did not foot the opportunity, they did not create the opportunity for government or for a private contractor to come in and say well listen here, Newfoundland and Labrador has a viable bunch of tradespeople out there who are welding right now, and if I cannot get them to come to me perhaps I will set up shop in Newfoundland and Labrador – business attraction.

It does not have to be all about Kiewit building the ships. It could have been another one of the yards here in Newfoundland and Labrador that could have expanded possibly, the Burry's Shipyard, for example, in Clarendville, maybe they would have expanded. Glovertown would be another place where possibly they could have expanded. That is one place that I look, Mr. Speaker. I look at little things that have happened here over the years where money has gone out of the provincial coffers that could have gone to better use.

Look at tire recycling, something as simple as that. What did government do? We had all these tires built up. Here it is a petroleum product, Mr. Speaker. In other areas of the world where tire crumbling is mixed into the pavement and used as part of the asphalt, it turns the road itself basically into a recyclable product. What did it do? It paid \$6 million. It paid a contractor \$6 million to take these tires, ship them off to them. That is taxpayer money now – \$6 million. I think that everybody in this House has ended up paying \$3 a tire too. They shipped it off for final burning in Quebec. It is gone to somebody else. It is a perfectly workable resource that we could have used in this Province. It is gone, a lost opportunity.

Energy retrofits, green energy, renewables; rather than talk about building the project that

we know as Muskrat Falls, they could have gone a bit heavier into energy retrofits and created green jobs at the same time, and created another form of stable taxation for itself. Government would have been able to build up its tax base again; but, Mr. Speaker, a lost opportunity. The money is gone. It is not there anymore. We have heard other people in this House and we have talked about it over here too in Natural Resources, talked about the opportunities for wood pellets that is still there yet on the side.

RED Boards; the role of the RED Boards was pretty important in this Province, particularly as it relates to smaller municipalities. When they got rid of the Regional Economic Development Boards a couple of years ago, they also lost an opportunity to link Newfoundland and Labrador businesses with the major industries that were here in this Province as well, not to mention the fact that one of the other jobs they were doing was linking each other so that they could create opportunities as well.

There was a pretty important project that was on the go out there in Central Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, when I was out there about a year and a half ago before these boards closed, about two years ago now before these boards closed up. They were anchoring some fantastic work in linking local businesses to the major industries that were out there and creating opportunities.

Well, what else were they doing besides creating opportunities? Mr. Speaker, they were creating part of the tax base. They were building up the tax base of labourers out there in small businesses and everything that would be contributing directly to the growth in our economy and wondering, what happened to the RED Boards?

Some municipalities, Mr. Speaker, cannot afford economic development officers. That opportunity is still not there for them, and still not even there for them when it comes to this particular Budget when it comes to the new agreement with municipalities. Part of helping a municipality grow would have been anchoring a Regional Economic Development office, a full complimentary staff there too, to help an area grow, and it is not there. It is not there. It is lost.

The government does not have the base that it should have had had it been pursuing proper opportunities. We know that oil at the time was a good opportunity. It is just a little bit short sighted to look at it as a revenue generator for the Province and to be dependent on it as much as what they did. They should have been able to depend on the other economic factors that would have been driving Newfoundland and Labrador. Part of that is building up your tax base and they did not do it. So I call that a lost opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, in the short time that I have left I wanted to talk about the municipal funding agreement. I will get into the future of the HST in the next time I am up on my feet, but when it comes to the municipal funding arrangement I thought that government could go a little bit further than what it did; \$420,000 in the water management end of things, Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is going to go all where we want it to go when it comes to the supplying of clean water to everybody in this Province.

I think government should have gone a little bit further than that. I think they could have gotten more money, for example, when it comes to the application of the HST. We know as motorists out there we are going to be paying an extra 2.5 cents per litre. We know as homeowners we are going to be paying an extra 2.5 cents on every dollar when it comes to energy use, and we know government is going to be the beneficiary of that. We have long argued over here on this of the House that government should be looking at that gas tax as a bit more of a revenue generator for municipalities at the same time.

While you are going to be paying 2.5 cents, I will leave you with this last thought. Right now, only a half cent a litre of that money that is being collected is going to be going directly to municipalities in year one. In year two and year three, it goes up to three-quarters of a cent, and then to one cent a litre, finally, after three years. Mr. Speaker, I believe that is too long to wait. Some of this money could go back to municipalities and could be going towards the addition, for example, of Regional Economic Development Boards at the same time.

I will leave those comments with government for now, Mr. Speaker. It will be a pleasure to get up again and point out a few other mistakes

that this government has made over the last thirteen years of its Administration.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

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

It is a pleasure today to be able to offer some comments on Budget 2015. The Budget debate is always the most significant debate in this Chamber. Every year it takes a significant amount of time and effort, and toing and froing and cut and thrust and so on. It is always a pleasure to get involved in it.

Budgets usually set two different parameters. When you are in good times, like we have been in the past, we talk about the things we were going to do in the Budget. The government put out the things they were going to fund and the initiatives they were going to get involved in, and here are our revenues and here is how we are going to spend them. The Opposition, on the other hand, always came back and said you are spending them in the wrong places and this is where you should spend them. That is typically the way the debates went.

This Budget is a little different. Debates on this Budget can go – practically it can take you in any direction. There are all kinds of things you can talk about when you talk about this Budget, because it was probably the most anticipated Budget we have had in a long time. There was a lot of speculation out there about what was going to be in this Budget, a lot of concern about what was going to be in the Budget.

Everybody recognized that we are in a bit of a fiscal situation. We knew that, everybody knew that. The minister had given perhaps semi-year proposals and whatnot on where we were. So everybody knew there was going to be a deficit. Everybody had their suggestions as to how we were going to cure that, how we were going to deal with that. Between the political pundits, the media people, and the Open Line conversations, different people had different ideas and suggestions of what this government was going to do.

So leading up to the Budget there was a lot of anticipation and speculation of what was going to happen. There were those people who would suggest government is going to have to curtail spending, going to cut back spending and going to have to cut the civil service drastically. There were other people suggesting that we are going to have to raise taxes significantly. There were other people suggesting we are going to have to borrow a lot of money.

Ironically, Mr. Speaker, the people who suggested one stream were in opposition to the other stream. People who suggested taxes, for example, would not want anything to do with borrowing. People who wanted to do borrowing did not want anything to do with cutting the civil service. So nobody was on the same page here and nobody ever is. What we have tried to do here is try to find a measured approach between all these things.

Mr. Speaker, this all came about as a result of the fiscal situation we found ourselves in, and due primarily to the bottom falling out of commodities, particularly oil and minerals. The Opposition members and members of the Third Party continually say that we should have foreseen this. We knew, why didn't you know, sort of thing. People out there could have told us.

The previous speaker just told us about this chap Leonardo. I do not know the individual. The member of the finance committee, the Finance Minister would every year – and his people would talk to the best experts they could find to give them information on oil prices and predicting oil prices. Now we might have missed this chap Leonardo, I do not know, but certainly they have the best they can find every year on oil prices. The only Leonardo I know about is Leonardo da Vinci. Now, he was a pretty smart man. I do not know if he knew very much about oil in his time.

Contrary to what people said, there was no way we could have predicted what was going to happen. If we were the only ones in that situation I could understand it. Saskatchewan, hardly anybody up there could predict it either; Alberta, nobody predicted it either. Of all the oil producing provinces and countries, nobody could predict this. Yet, they keep saying you

should have known, and put away money for a rainy day.

I do not recall in one Budget debate for the last five or six years anybody ever suggesting on that side of the House that we should have put money away for a rainy day, for a heritage fund. I never heard it in debate. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, Mr. Speaker, but in leading up to debate you had all that conundrum of opinion on what should be done with this Province to get us through these fiscal problems that we have. Everybody had their suggestion, and still do.

You can talk to people today, different business people, and they are not happy. Some people are not happy with borrowing. Other people are not happy with raising taxes. Other people are not happy because we did not cut the civil service enough. So you are going to get all these plethora of opinions coming in. The job of the government is to try and find a measured way through all of that.

I have been involved in this House in at least eight or nine Budgets – maybe ten. I have been at the Cabinet table for at least five or six. They are very tedious processes. They are very difficult processes, Budget deliberations. They go on for a long time. A lot of people put a lot of hours and work into it, a lot of days and nights, including Cabinet ministers, and it is a very challenging process. It is much easier in times, of course, when you have money. It is much easier then, but when you have some fiscal challenges it is a lot more difficult.

This was a very difficult Budget and when you are trying to find deficiencies around the table, you are trying to find big numbers and where to cut, then that is a very challenging exercise. You have commitments in this Province for infrastructure. We have capacity problems in schools. We have schools with more kids than we could ever envision we would have. There is no place for them to go. So we have to build schools. We have to build hospitals. We have to build roads and fix bridges.

These are all infrastructure commitments that we have to continue with. It is pretty hard to say we will not build this school, but we will build this one. Those are the challenges that we have to make. That is why we put out the major

projects, like the HMP for example, the St. John's Courthouse, the Waterford Hospital.

We have not given up on these projects. We have pushed them out because we have to. You cannot do everything. You cannot be all things to all men. You just cannot do it. You have to make decisions, and that is what this government does. This government is not afraid to make decisions and that is what we have done.

Mr. Speaker, then there are programs, what programs do you cut? Do you cut programs involving seniors? Do you cut programs involving the most vulnerable, people with disabilities, youth? Which programs do you cut? If you do cut, how much is it going to get you?

I heard an interview with the Leader of the Opposition over the weekend, and the moderator said: You have given me opportunities where you can cut some money, \$1 million. What is \$1 million going to do for you to a \$1 billion Budget? There were no answers to that. I will come to that later.

Mr. Speaker, you will also have to keep in mind the effects that your decisions are going to have on the economy. If you cut the bottom of the civil service, what is that going to do for the economy? If you raise taxes too high, what is that going to do with the economy?

The HST, the Opposition keeps saying the HST is a job killer. Well, that is a myth; it has been proven it is a myth. HST will have 1 per cent effect on the economy, Mr. Speaker; that is all, 1 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, what do we do? We had to take a balance approach. The first time in history we have a five-year plan to deal with the fiscal problems, a way to manage ourselves through the plan. We are putting forth a clear, detailed, concise plan as to how to manage the next five years – the first time in history – and we are going to meet our targets.

Let me talk about some of the targets we are going to try to meet, Mr. Speaker. For example, the debt expenses, as a percentage of gross revenue, will not exceed 13 per cent. Thirteen

per cent is a threshold you try to keep below. So the debt expense will not exceed the 13 per cent. Over the years, up to 2009, debt expense as a percentage of gross revenue went as high as almost 30 per cent, but since 2009 it has always been below that threshold of 13 per cent. Now, it is going to go up close to it again in 2016-2017, but we are going to keep bringing it down.

Mr. Speaker, our net debt, as a percentage of our nominal GDP, will not exceed 40 per cent. That is another threshold. That has gone all over the place in previous years, but up to 2009 that was up as high as 70 per cent. We are going to keep that down below 40 per cent.

These are fiscal targets that this five-year plan is going to meet, all set out in detail: a measured, balanced plan. A balanced plan to ensure that our economy remains strong and that we will be back in surplus in five years. The position we are in, Mr. Speaker, everybody recognizes is a temporary one. It is a bump in the road; it is a temporary one. So, good, prudent fiscal management, gradual change, as we have proposed in this Budget, that is what will do the least harm to the Province's economy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is the plan in Budget 2015. It is about choices – we had to make choices. We hear from the Opposition Finance critic, who is willing to slash and burn, she does not know what she is going to eliminate government yet until she sees the books, but she is obviously going to cut and burn. The Leader of the Opposition, on the other hand, is going to borrow more. It is difficult to know just what their plan is.

Our government has a plan – and we are prepared to go to the polls in the fall with that plan. We are prepared to go to the polls with that plan. We will put that plan up against the Liberal plan, when we see it. We have not seen it yet, but I am assuming they will have one. They are not going to go to the polls without a plan, obviously. I cannot see them doing that. We will put our plan up against theirs. Here is our plan: detail, fiscal targets to meet, five years; here it is. The people will make the decision which way they are going to go.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to make strategic investments. We have to, again, for the

sake of the economy. We are going to invest in health care. We are going to invest in education. We are going to invest in our seniors. We have to in order to support the economy. Our economy, Mr. Speaker, is very strong. We are not in a recession, contrary to what some people might lead us to believe. Our economy is strong.

We are going to have a very detailed, measured approach. Mr. Speaker, what will we do? Let's look at the main components of it. We are going to reduce the civil service through attrition. Now, the Opposition would have you believe – and they are out every day saying they are going to cut 1,600 jobs. They are giving the impression we are going to cut them now, which is not true. We are going to reduce the civil service by approximately – I think we voted on 100-and-something; it was mentioned in the Budget. The Minister of Health mentioned another 100-odd, so we are looking at probably 1,600 jobs through attrition over five years.

Four to five hundred people leave the civil service, Mr. Speaker, every year. For every ten people that go out, we are going to hire back eight. That does two things; it reduces the civil service but it keeps our young expertise, our strong, competent people. We are not laying off the bottom of the list; we are keeping our young talented people and the people going out are the older retired people. Mr. Speaker, that is what attrition does for us, and it is going to happen over five years.

The unions are out beating the drum, not going to happen, not going to happen on our watch. Other people are suggesting we should do more. I had a talk with a very prominent construction company owner last week and he said we did not do enough in terms of cutting the civil service. You have to realize how valuable the civil service is and how important it is not to cut too much in any one particular direction so as to do damage to the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak for a minute on the HST initiatives. They have made big things with the HST over there. They have blown up HST. It is going to be the ruination of the Province. It is going to be taking money out of people's pockets. They are going to put people in the poor house. It is myths, most of it.

Mr. Speaker, what is going to happen with the 2 per cent HST; the threshold for the HST credit is now going to go from \$18,000 up to \$30,000. So an extra 57,000 more people are going to take advantage of the HST credit. Not only that, the HST credit is going to go from \$40 per eligible person up to \$300. A spouse is going to go from \$40 to \$60.

Mr. Speaker, I read an article the other day and it made a lot of sense. A lot of people on the lower-income bracket are going to be better off as a result of this because of the tax credit. They are not saying that.

The heat rebate stays the same. So, Mr. Speaker, you make your cuts where it does the least harm to people, and that is what we have done.

Income tax levels are at a higher range. It has increased, bringing it in line with the rest of the provinces. We still have the lowest personal income tax in the Atlantic Provinces. There are only three other provinces in the country that have better income tax than us.

Mr. Speaker, we did not slash and burn. We did not borrow more than was anticipated. We came up with a balanced, measured approach to have the least impact on the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote if I can. I made some notes. I am not paraphrasing. I am taking the quote pretty well from *The Telegram* sometime early last week. It was reaction to a speech given by the Opposition Finance critic, and I quote, "The government has accused the Liberals of failing to provide any sort of cohesive alternative to the tough choices in the budget."

Bennett's speech largely lived up to the Tories' accusations. She heaped scorn on the government for everything from hospital construction to diesel fuel purchases, but did not lay out a clear alternative for how the Liberals would approach the province's budget situation."

That is the media. Anybody who saw *On Point* the weekend, the Leader of the Opposition did a masterful job at avoiding questions. I have never seen Cochrane so agitated. He did a

masterful job, and absolutely no answers. Except to say, we will do it better. We have the expertise on our side of the House, he says, to do it better. That is what he says, we will do it better.

The Finance critic says we are going to develop a smarter economy. I have heard of all kinds of economies, robust economies, heated economies, bad economies. I never heard of a smart one. I guess all along we have been having stunned economies, I do not know.

In the few minutes I have left, Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about Nalcor. Nalcor is the future of this Province. Nalcor is going to be the mechanism that turns this Province into a diversified economy that reduces our dependence on oil. It is going to be the future of this Province. It is a company that has to compete and is competing with the best in the world, including Norway, as the minister mentioned today.

Every cent of the \$3 billion that we are investing in Nalcor is going to come back to us. Then after that, a billion dollars a year is going to come back to us in addition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: That is investment. You spend money to make money. That is investment. How can you criticize that?

Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, has a tremendous basin of potential in oil off this Province. This Province, through Nalcor – 80,000 kilometres of new, modern, seismic data has recently been acquired over the time; 80,000 kilometres is available now for licensing.

Newfoundland and Labrador is also host to more than one million square kilometres of offshore acreage, comparable to the Gulf of Mexico. You could take all the North Sea and put it into only a portion of our offshore possibilities. Mr. Speaker, investments in Nalcor are crucial to the future of this Province and will be returned to us a hundredfold.

Private partnerships, just for a minute. The Opposition said we will reverse the decision on private partnerships. We will reverse that. My

question then, how do you build 360 long-term care beds? Where do you find the hundreds of millions of dollars to build 360 long-term care beds? They are against that. They are against long-term care, is all I can figure out. They must be against long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, the future of this Province is tremendous. The future of the economy is tremendous. We have ten years of great growth. It slowed a little bit, but tremendous potential. This Budget is a detailed plan that we will present to the polls in the fall to lead us through the next period of fiscal management. The people will make that decision then.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a daunting task to follow the Attorney General and his experience, his gift of debate, and everything –

AN HON. MEMBER: Be nice, be nice.

MR. HILLIER: I am trying to be nice. That is my goal today. I am going to be nice all day.

Mr. Speaker, as a new member, I have been clicking off milestones as the last six months or eight months have gone by. I was really delighted when the Member for Labrador West actually took me on in the House. It means that you belong when somebody takes you on. You are important enough that somebody takes you on. I have been checking off these milestones that I go through. Of course, this whole Budget piece is indeed a milestone in itself.

A couple of weeks ago we saw the dissolution of the last session by the Lieutenant Governor. We saw the pageantry that goes with the bringing in of the Speech from the Throne. We saw the anticipation of the new Budget and everybody wondering what is going to be in the new Budget, the presentation of the Budget, and the subsequent commentary on the Budget. I spent an evening with the Minister of Seniors,

Wellness and Social Development in Estimates to get an opportunity to have a look closer at the numbers in that particular department. Mr. Speaker, it has certainly been an interesting couple of weeks.

The highlight of those weeks for me was to be able to sit back and watch my colleague from Virginia Waters speak for four hours on a budget, to actually get up and speak for four hours on the concerns that she has with that document. The Minister of Finance took two hours to read it. The Member for Virginia Waters spoke for four hours on her concerns. We could go back through and pull out some pieces from her speech, but a couple rang true to me. It says: One, it is important for our Province to understand the extent of the financial mess, how Tories mismanaged it, and what Liberals will do to get it back.

The other one that I pulled out: After years of Tory mismanagement, this Budget should have focused on diversifying our economy and structuring our resources to meet the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but indeed it was done in crisis mode.

Mr. Speaker, we could go on through those four hours and pull out pieces – and I know people have talked about how it really was not a riveting speech. It is about substance, not form when it comes down to identifying exactly what is important in this year's Budget.

I sat here this afternoon and listened to several members opposite speak on the Budget. In the speaking points there are a couple of things that holds true. One is they talk about yes, we have a plan. The Auditor General talked about the five-year plan. Mr. Speaker, finally, they have a plan after twelve years. They have been sitting for twelve years. It has been mismanagement for twelve years. It has been oil, oil, oil for twelve years. Now they have to decide that we better put a plan in place. Mr. Speaker, it is going to take them five years to get out of the mess they set up over those twelve years.

The Member for Bonavista North talked about how the fish dwindled. He talked about how the minerals dwindled. He talked about how the oil revenues dwindled. How many times do resources have to dwindle before government

realizes that at some point in time there has to be a contingency plan because all resources will dwindle at some point in time?

The Auditor General said it was not our fault that oil fell. Fish dwindled, minerals dwindled, forestry dwindled, oil dwindled – where is the pattern, Mr. Speaker? When are they going to finally realize there is a pattern here and at some point in time all resources dwindle and there has to be a plan? They have a plan now. It is a five-year plan. They are consistent, though. There was a five-year plan to clean up a twelve-year mess.

The Auditor General said: It is not just us. The Member for Bonavista South said: It is not just us. Saskatchewan is in the same boat. Alberta is in the same boat.

Mr. Speaker, I go back to my poor old grandmother. When I came home and said that I had torn the knee out of the leg of my pants, or I got caught chewing gum in school, and she got upset with me, I said well, granny, Randy got caught doing the same thing. The same as Saskatchewan got caught doing the same thing and Alberta got caught doing the same thing, Randy got caught doing the same thing. My grandmother's response was: Rex, if Randy ran down and jumped off the head of the wharf, would you go down and jump off the head of the wharf?

Mr. Speaker, that is where we are going to today with Saskatchewan and Alberta. Just because they are there, there is no reason we should not be there. It is mismanagement, Mr. Speaker. We all know that resources will dwindle at some point in time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to go back a couple of weeks to the Throne Speech and when we look at the whole fact that has been no plan. I have a buddy, Bob; Bob sits around in one of the coffee shops in Conception Bay South. We all drop into the coffee shops – or we still drop into coffee shops. After the last budget I am not sure about the members opposite if they go into coffee shops, but Bob is always in the coffee shop. I stopped in and Bob was down at the big table down in the corner.

I went in one day just after the Throne Speech and of course Bob jumps up and says: Well, Rex, what do you think of the Throne Speech? I said: Bob, if this is the plan for the Budget, then I guess it is going to be a stay-the-course Budget. He said: How come you can answer that so quickly? I said: Well, they used the word “continue” so often in the Throne Speech. Yes, Bob said, they did, didn't they? I said: My understanding is that the media picked up on it, the social media picked up on it; it was all about “continue.”

So Bob says: I guess that means it is going to be a stay-the-course Budget. We left it at that, had our coffee, and went on our way. A couple of days later we are back in the coffee shop and Bob said: Rex, you were right. I said: Bob, what was I right about this time? He said: You were right about the stay-the-course Budget. I said: How do you mean? He said I went home – you have to realize Bob has a lot of time on his hands; he is like a dog with a bone when he gets a challenge. So, Bob went home and opened up Hansard. He said: Rex, they used the word “continue” sixty-five times in the Throne Speech. It was thirty-six times in the Speech. The Member for Springdale used it seven times, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune used it six times, and the Premier used it sixteen. It is sixty-five times they used “continue”, so it had to be a stay-the-course Budget.

Rex, he said, there is more to it than that. He said: All these guys want to do is talk about what they have done. We have done this and we have done that. I said: What do you mean, Bob? Well he said: I checked the “we have” in Hansard. Mr. Speaker, they used “we have” 113 times in the Throne Speech – 113 times. This is what Bob is saying now. Bob counted up the “we have” and he said all they have done –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: Bob said: All I did was do a search for “we have”; we have done this and we have done that. We have seen it all winter, Mr. Speaker, this government talking about what they have done. We have done this; we have done that. Mr. Speaker, 113 times Bob found “we have” during the Throne Speech.

I said: Bob, so I guess this is going to be a stay-the-course Budget. Bob, they must have said they were going to do something. What would be an indicator of the things that they are going to do? Well Bob said: I guess if they said, we will, it would be an indicator of what they are going to do. I told you; Bob has a lot of time on his hands.

Mr. Speaker, so I said Bob –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: How many times did they use “we will”? Bob said thirty-three times. I said: Gee, that is not bad. I did not expect it to be that. Then Bob started laughing. Bob is a bit of a funny man. Bob started laughing. Bob said: Yes, thirty-three times, but a dozen of those were “we will continue.” Ha ha, there you go; “we will continue.”

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is read by the Lieutenant Governor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: It is supposed to be an indicator of where government is going in its next session. Mr. Speaker, I would have thought this Throne Speech would have been an opportunity for a new Premier, a Premier without a mandate to govern, to put his stamp on the agenda of this government. Instead, we sat listening to what the government has done and will continue to do. Not what he has done, but what other Premiers have done.

This could have been the Speech from the Throne according to Kathy Dunderdale. It could have been the Speech from the Throne according to Tom Marshall. It is what we have done, not where we are going.

Mr. Speaker, then came the Budget. This is what we are going to do; this is how we are going to pay for it.

It did not take very far to get in before I came across a passage that pretty much exemplifies

the whole piece here and where I want to go with the next eight minutes that I have left. I quote the Finance Minister early in the Budget, on Page 2, “Let me begin by speaking, not about the immediate, short-term fiscal challenges we are facing, but about the new approaches we are taking to build a stronger province for the long term.”

I could not possibly read it as well as he can. “The short-term challenges are just that – short-term; temporary; transitory; finite in duration. We will get through them, just as we have gotten through the challenges of the past. Recall the global economic downturn of 2009. We endured it, we survived it and we are stronger because of how we managed it. Long-term principles are guiding stars that lead us through challenging times and ever upward to higher goals.” Mr. Speaker, right from the beginning creative writers have had too much of an impact on this Budget.

He talks about steering us through the recession. Mr. Speaker, we did not know there was a recession. This government was on remote control: produce the oil, cash the cheques, spend the money; produce the oil, cash the cheques, spend the money; produce the oil, cash the cheques, spend the money. It was remote control.

Mr. Speaker, my brother lives in Ontario. During the recession he lost his job. He has been working in the same job for twenty years in Ontario, during the recession he lost his job. I got a raise during the recession. We did not know there was a recession. Government did not know there was a recession.

During the recession, Mr. Speaker, I visited my brother in Ontario. We were going down the street one day and there was this beautiful new building with for lease in the windows. I am saying to myself – at the time I would have been a councillor in Conception Bay South and you are always looking at economic development. When you see signs of economic growth, it clicks like that. So I said to my brother Don, it must be great to be living in an economy where you have these big buildings being built and businesses moving in. He looked at me and said, no, you have it all wrong. He said a month

ago that building was full and now it is empty of businesses.

That is what the recession was about. We did not know there was a recession. At some point in time it should have clicked. That is fine, if we have lots of oil money, let's work our way through it and let's get through this recession. At some point in time somebody should have said, what would it have been like if we did not have this oil? But it did not happen, Mr. Speaker. They just kept on spending, and kept on spending, and kept on spending. Nobody in the last seven years ever said, what happens if that oil revenue were not there? What is our contingency plan?

It goes back to what I said initially, dwindling fish, dwindling resources, dwindling oil, dwindling forestry, dwindling minerals. At some point in time somebody has to say, what is our plan to get beyond this? That did not happen, Mr. Speaker. That did not happen.

Our average growth from 2008 to 2015 was minus 0.4 per cent. We spent oil like it would never end. We spent oil money like it would never end while our growth rate was in the negative side, and nobody ever said, thank God, we have the oil. What will we do when the revenues are gone?

Mr. Speaker, this Budget brings us a \$1.1 billion deficit. I ask the Member for Labrador West to confirm that. Yes, that is B, for billion.

Mr. Speaker, we have almost a \$13 billion debt as a result. I will ask the same person to confirm B is for billion, \$13 billion. Is that correct?

MR. MCGRATH: (Inaudible).

MR. HILLIER: Right on.

After we have collected \$25 billion from the oil industry, and I am correct. Is that correct, B is for billion, \$25 billion? Mr. Speaker, no wonder the paltry \$20 million that we gave back to Frank Coleman seems so insignificant to this particular government.

The Finance Minister, in a quote that I read said, "... we are stronger because of how we managed it." They did not manage. They did not know

they had anything to manage. They did not know there was a recession. They just slid right on through with the oil money. Here we are today, "... we are stronger because of how we managed it."

Our economic indicators are like the ski slopes of Marble Mountain, Mr. Speaker. GDP real percentage change is down. Household income real percentage change is down. Housing starts change is down. Labour force percentage change is down. Mr. Speaker, that is not the bunny slope. That is OMJ. That is the direction that all of our indicators are moving.

Mr. Speaker, he is going to steer us in a safe course through the stars for the next five years. Based on what they have done in the past five, it is not going to happen. This government was on autopilot during that time. Produce the oil, cash the cheques, spend the money; produce the oil, cash the cheques, spend the money; produce the oil, cash the cheques, spend the money. That was autopilot, Mr. Speaker, remote control. They did not manage, but they are blaming it on oil.

Williams saw it; he packed it in and went home. Dunderdale saw it, she quit. Marshall saw it, he got out. Over here all of a sudden, what are we going to do? Oil has dropped to \$50 a barrel, what are we going to do? Well, we are going to do it the way we got through the last crisis, which was nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you blame it on oil. You do not blame things on inanimate objects. If your brakes fail and you have an accident, you do not blame it on the car. It is the same with oil. You do not blame the loss of oil on oil. Somebody takes the blame. The blame has to go to those who did not plan. This is the group across here, the group that did not plan.

Mr. Speaker, I am very optimistic about our future, but we need our economy to be better managed to get there. We will take Newfoundland and Labrador through this mess. We will do that by executing our plans beyond what happened in the last five years, Mr. Speaker. We will take it forward. We will bring this Province out of this mess and we will not be on automatic pilot, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HILLIER: It will be an active plan that will take us out of this mess, and it will be a Liberal plan.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. GRANTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a privilege this afternoon, at this hour of the day, to get up and speak for fifteen or twenty minutes or so.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member opposite was talking about when members from this side of the House of Assembly get up to speak we often go back and refer to where we brought this Province from over the last ten or a dozen years and about the investments that we made. It was interesting that he kept saying that we spend a lot of time talking about the successes that we have had and listing off the successes that we have had year after year after year after year and looking at the infrastructure that we have done.

MR. JOYCE: You are still at it (inaudible).

MR. GRANTER: He kind of criticized and he is shouting across – I sat for the last twenty minutes, Mr. Speaker, listened to the member opposite and did not open my mouth. I would ask for the courtesy of the member opposite to listen to what I have to say for the next fifteen or twenty minutes.

He talked about we get up and stand on our feet about the investments that we have made in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, in programs that they made for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and infrastructure investments that we made in Newfoundland and Labrador over the last number of years. Interestingly enough, they speak out of both sides of their mouth because only a week or so ago when we were debating Bill 1, the members opposite stood and all they spoke about is what

we did two or three years ago with regard to the ATIPPA legislation.

You cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. You can either allow us to stand on our feet and talk about what we have done in a positive sense in the Province, but you cannot get up both ways and speak out of both sides of your mouth about what we have done or what we did not do.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. GRANTER: I will tell you what we have done – and I say to the member opposite in all due respect, what would we not do in CBS, in your district down through the years? Would we have cut this particular project or cut that particular project? Would we go out now and cut this particular school or that particular school? We have invested heavily in infrastructure in the Province, Mr. Speaker, when we had the money – we have invested heavily, when we have the money.

You travel throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, all regions throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and every region of the Province, Mr. Speaker, got some investments in infrastructure. I am pleased with the infrastructure that we got in my own district. We do not have it all and there are things yet to be done. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have stood in this House time and time again and talked about the millions of dollars invested in Western Newfoundland, Corner Brook, Bay of Islands, Humber East, Humber West, and throughout the entire region.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I was proud this past weekend to attend two events. This past weekend was probably one of the busiest weekends I have had has an MHA, with all of the events that we had to attend. On Saturday evening I attended the official opening of the Rotary Arts Centre, a marvelous facility located in the City of Corner Brook with the effort of the community, local organizations, a board of directors that looked at a need in Corner Brook for an arts centre – an arts centre of about 100 seats because we have the Arts and Culture Centre there that seats 200 or 300, but for small

activities, small theatre groups, an arts centre of about 100 seats.

I had the privilege and opportunity on Saturday evening to attend, along with the Member for Humber East, to have the official opening of that particular centre. It was a marvelous opportunity because the theatre and music and the culture aspect in Corner Brook, in the Western Region of the Northern Peninsula, is absolutely phenomenal, Mr. Speaker. That was an investment. It was a contribution from the provincial government of I believe \$362,000 matched by federal funds through ACOA and also from the private sector. It is an absolutely wonderful facility that will support theatre and arts and music in Corner Brook and the region for many, many years to come.

That is a real example of the contributions that this government has made to a region of the Province. That is just one small example that we committed to and that we worked on together to deliver for the people of Corner Brook and the people of the Western Region.

Also on Friday or Saturday – I was so busy this past weekend I cannot even remember what day it was – I had the Mayor of Corner Brook and the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs come to Corner Brook to officially open the \$50 million water treatment facility – \$50 million water treatment facility for Corner Brook and the region.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, would that have been an investment that we should not have made? Is that an investment that we should not have made? I know that throughout municipalities, and I know the Member for Bay of Islands speaks about it from time to time, there are still needs in the Province with regard to water and water treatment; I agree with him, absolutely. We put that one on our list for the treatment centre in Corner Brook, the water treatment facility, and we did it. That is not to say that next year or the year after there will be another treatment facility for some other municipality. We are providing funds for municipalities, Mr. Speaker, to address those issues.

That is where the millions and hundreds of millions of dollars have gone. We had an infrastructure deficit as we all know in the Province, and I can speak to this for all afternoon, an infrastructure deficit in health care and in education down through the years. When the monies came in, Mr. Speaker, through offshore oil revenues to the Province, we had to invest. We have to invest for the people of the Province, and that is where our monies are gone. Now, Mr. Speaker, with oil at \$60, \$67, or whatever it is today, \$70-odd a barrel, we have to readjust. We have to readjust our spending until our world markets come back and until the coffers start to fill up again in the Province and we will invest again.

The leadership on this side of the House, we have shown that we are able to make deals with multinational companies and produce results for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we will invest again. We will invest again for the future of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take some time this afternoon to talk about the departments that I am responsible for and also a little bit about my own district. The unpredictable decline in oil prices has placed a great strain on our revenues and we need to adjust our course to meet the new reality. There is no difference if you are on that side of the House or on this side of the House, you have so much money coming in, you make a decision on where you are going to put the money out. We believe that we have the experience and we have shown the people of the Province where we can invest, and the kinds of infrastructure and the kinds of programs that we can invest in.

There is a fiscal challenge. It is not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. The decline in oil prices has negatively impacted every oil-producing country in the world. We are no different in Canada and we are no different – the Member for Bay of Islands was just over there waving his hands in front of me. It is kind of bringing a smile to my face.

Mr. Speaker, we have an advantage here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have an abundance of natural resources, all of which contribute to our Province's economy. That is a no-brainer.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about three areas in natural resources. I want to talk about forestry and agrifoods for the next little while that I have. I also want to talk about the fishery and the value of the fishery to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to first talk a little bit about the forestry. For Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we place a tremendous value on our forest resource, Mr. Speaker, for economic and social and cultural reasons. Our commitment to the forest industry is strong.

The forest industry is valued in Newfoundland and Labrador at \$250 million annually, and has directly and indirectly employed some 5,500 men and women, not only in Corner Brook but throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: All regions of the Province are impacted by our natural resources, our natural industry with regard to the forestry. Mr. Speaker, Budget 2015 will focus on a continued long-term development of the Province's forestry resource. A new Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy is an example. Growing our Renewable and Sustainable Forest Economy is the guiding document upon which development will occur over the next ten years.

The strategy protects the natural forest resource and guides the forest industry in its development of a very high value, diversified sector providing continued economic benefits throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. Last week, members opposite, and in particular the Member for Virginia Waters – and I was sat here listening. She spoke for a considerable amount of time, which is her right and her responsibility to do in response to the Budget Speech. It was something she said that caught my ear last week. I just want to quote it because it is in Hansard.

I know that the Member for Bay of Islands and the Leader of the Opposition – when I connect the dots in what I am about to say in the next minute or two, I think we will set the record straight and probably set the record straight here this afternoon. When the Member for Virginia Waters said, "... this government ignored the economy with a narrow-minded focus on oil and

gas while other industries faltered and failed." Then the quote was, "Is the minister talking about the durability of the pulp industry?" I believe she was referencing the Minister of Finance.

She went on to say, "What about the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper facility that has seen a continuing shrinkage in their workforce? Mr. Speaker, this government's single focus on one industry failed to recognize the importance of all of the other industries in our Province."

I just said, Mr. Speaker, that we invested heavily in one example, in tourism. I call on the minister of tourism; he can stand up and speak for himself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: If I can recall from the Budget Speech we have increased this year the Budget for tourism-related industries from \$11 million to \$13 million this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: That is a \$2 million increase in tourism alone. I would say to the members opposite: Did we ignore the tourism industry in the last number of years? We have grown the tourism industry in the Province.

Have we ignored the tourism industry? Do we need to take the tourism industry to another level? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, but we have not ignored the tourism industry. We have not ignored the tourism industry like we have not ignored other industries.

Mr. Speaker, more to my point, it was the line on Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. I want to remind the Member for Virginia Waters, and I also want to remind my colleagues on this side of the House – and I know I would have the support, when I say this, from my colleague from Bay of Islands. I know I would from the Leader of the Opposition.

During the period of time when negotiations were taking place with Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and the industry alike, we had conversations, the Member for Bay of Islands, and myself, because I was the Parliamentary

Secretary for Natural Resources at the time, and the Leader of the Opposition. Together we realize the importance, Mr. Speaker, of the forest industry in the Province.

So I want to correct the statement by the Member for Virginia Waters. I was proud today when the current Minister of Natural Resources, myself, and the former Premier Marshall went to Corner Brook last February. In 2014, the provincial government announced a \$110 million loan agreement, and a power assets and water rights purchase agreement with Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Does that indicate to you that we forgot about the forest industry in the Province, Mr. Speaker? Does that mean we do not have issues to address in forestry? Yes it does, but do you know what? We saw fit, with the support of the Member for Bay of Islands and with the support of the Leader of the Opposition, how important Corner Brook Pulp and Paper was to the forest industry in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was a proud moment and a proud day for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, the investment supports the sustainability of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited, and will ensure the company is committed to the long-term operation of the mill in Corner Brook. I know during those negotiations, there were hours and hours and hours, days and days and days of work between the current workers at the mill and the retired workers at the mill. We were on pins and needles for a while. A lot of negotiations took place back and forth. We committed to \$110 million to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper to see a long-term sustainability of that industry in the Province for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government's commitment to the mill will help secure the future of our forest industry for the benefit of the people in the Western Region and the entire Province because it is not only Corner Brook. It is like a web. Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is like a web. The forest industry in the Province all reaches out, it is all interconnected. It is like the fishery. You cannot make a decision on one

act of the fishery without having an impact on other aspects of the fishery.

It is easy to stand on your feet and make general blanket statements, Mr. Speaker, but I tell you, when you make a statement about the fishery, or you make a statement about forestry, it is all interconnected. It is when you make a decision about one aspect of the industry you are affecting something else over there. It is easy for somebody to stand and say let's make a decision on this today, let's go in that direction. By making a decision in this direction, you are having an impact somewhere else in the industry. It is the same thing in forestry.

Corner Brook Pulp and Paper has undergone cost-cutting measures over the last little while and made tremendous gains in processing, efficiency, and productivity. Today, Mr. Speaker, they are one of the lowest-cost producers in North America and are very competitive in today's marketplace. That is the support we gave to the people of Corner Brook, to the people of Western Newfoundland, to the current workers, to the retired workers, and to the forest industry of Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, I say it was a proud moment.

By investing in Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, Mr. Speaker, we are reaching out to the entire forest industry, as I just said. Paper mills, large sawmills, and Crown land harvesting operators are integrated and therefore interdependent. We want to ensure as a government the wealth from our renewable resources continues well into the future. We have altered the course due to the revenue circumstances of the Province and we have transformed our long-term fiscal plan.

In this year's Budget 2015, we decreased the cost of commercial sawmill licences for small and medium-sized sawmills, while the licence fee for large sawmills remained unchanged. So that is putting money back into the pockets of small sawmills licences and small sawmills owners – small and medium sized, Mr. Speaker.

Budget 2015, as well, Mr. Speaker, is providing close to \$30 million for silviculture projects, construction of resource roads for timber harvesting, forest insect and disease control, forest fire control measures for research and development, and regional operations. So we

continue to invest in a very valuable resource, our natural resource, of the forestry and related industries.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about agrifoods which is also a responsibility of me as minister, Mr. Speaker. The agrifoods industry generates direct and indirect employment in Newfoundland and Labrador, 6,500 men and women throughout the Province ranging from small-scale horticulture companies to large dairy operations. They are not only in urban regions; they are in small rural parts of the Province. That is very important when we are looking at agrifoods.

Our government is committed to working with farmers and producers to further develop the industry, which together with the agrifoods production is valued at nearly \$500 million a year. Mr. Speaker, \$500 million a year in gross domestic product in agrifoods in the Province. There is room for us to grow our agrifoods. We have a plan in place to grow our agrifoods across the Province and security of our food. As we move forward that is where we need to take our agrifoods industry.

Through Budget 2015 we will provide nearly \$12 million for Growing Forward 2, the Agriculture and Agrifoods Development Fund, Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program, Land Consolidation Program, Agricultural Research and Development Program, and the agriculture Limestone Program. So, Mr. Speaker, I say again, we have not just been focused on the oil industry and the oil revenues; we have continued and maintained the focus on forestry and agrifoods.

Again this week and last week – how important our fishery is. I keep going back to how important our fishery is. I meet on a daily basis with industry folk, harvesters, and unions. It is a priority for me as minister. It is a priority to this government, Mr. Speaker, the fishery, forestry and agrifoods agencies of the Province.

Growing Forward 2 is a five-year federal-provincial-territorial plan, Mr. Speaker. It is a \$37 million cost-shared agreement with a vision for profitable and innovative agriculture, agrifoods, and agri-based products. It provides financial investment through three program

areas to address the unique challenges and opportunities faced in our agriculture and agrifoods sector.

Growing Forward 2 is built on partnerships, Mr. Speaker. We have numerous examples throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Farmers and producers utilize this program to further enhance their entrepreneurial spirit, to be creative and innovative, and to help drive economic growth. Most of this economic growth is driven in rural parts of the Province.

I will give a couple of examples in the next couple of minutes that I have. Pure Holstein in Little Rapids, just outside Corner Brook, has a new state of the art milk-producing system, Mr. Speaker, provided through financing from Growing Forward 2. It is the first robotic milking system in Newfoundland and Labrador. Already this innovative project has resulted in an 18 per cent increase in milk production in the Province.

Lester's Farm Market Inc. here in St. John's has a new harvester that improves crop harvesting speed and efficiency. Our investment will enable the farm to be more competitive and allow them to increase their acreage. If that is what we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is to grow young farmers here in Newfoundland and Labrador whether it is in agriculture or whether it is in milk production, that is the kind of programs that we need to continue to invest in and to invest more in them.

Growing Forward 2 continues to invest in agriculture and classroom activities, including Little Green Thumbs which is being offered in many classrooms throughout the Province this year. School children learn to grow vegetables in their classrooms and to understand the value of food production and food security and healthy eating.

The Agriculture and Agrifoods Development Fund provides \$2.5 million annually to encourage the development, diversification, and the expansion of large-scale agriculture projects in either the primary or secondary processing sectors; \$2.5 million per year for secondary processing activities, which will improve the economic viability of the agriculture and agrifoods industry.

Mr. Speaker, one that is very important to me, and we often hear members opposite talk about this, is we require more land for young farmers – \$2.2 million Land Consolidation Program. It provides an opportunity for non-farm landowners and retiring farmers to sell land back to the government so that we can put land back into new farmers and young farmers, Mr. Speaker.

I look at the clock and my time is up. I look forward to standing on my feet again in the coming days to speak again, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the fine people of Humber East for allowing me the opportunity and the honour to stand in this House to represent them, particularly on this important occasion when we are bringing down a Budget; because contrary to what the government thinks this is, we are spending the people's money and we have to do that very cautiously and not waste the money, given the situation that we are in.

The theme for this Budget is Balancing Choices for a Promising Future. I ask the members opposite if you could not balance a Budget for six months, how do you expect someone to believe that you can lay a plan in place for five years and not be able to make adjustments in that? It is total hogwash. We have gone through six months of last year's Budget, only to find out that we were half a billion dollars short.

I would like to quote here briefly something that I had read from one of the ministers opposite: We could have made easy choices to raise taxes or increase our debt, but we will not jeopardize the progress that we have made in this Province. Well, that is certainly not true for the Budget that was brought down just a week or so ago. Through attrition, we are losing in the area of 1,800 jobs that we know about, because trying to find out even this morning what jobs were gone in the department that I sat down with is still very unclear.

We have a 2 per cent raise in the HST; our swimming pools are now going to be raised – the prices for kids and seniors to go in and use our swimming pools is going to put a lot of that out of reach. Just to emphasize that there is no understanding of the business community, and I think the fact that they raised the big game licence fee by 50 per cent is just a prime example of having no idea how business runs. Unfortunately, just to name a few, this is what we have seen from this government.

Briefly, I want to get back to an issue that I think is very important to the people of the West Coast – not the people of Corner Brook. Sure, the people of Corner Brook will benefit, but I would like to bring it back to the facility that has been an election promise since 2007, because that is when the hospital was announced for Corner Brook. It was again promised in 2008, promised in 2009. In 2010 they said it would be finished by 2016 – which is another broken promise. In 2011 they said it would be finished in 2017 – another broken promise to the people of the West Coast.

To add insult to injury, it went on to 2012 that it was going to be finished in 2018, and then in 2014 they said it was going to be done in 2019. We are no closer today than we were back in 2007, except we have a nice of land cleared that we can walk our dogs on. I think it is shameful, shameful to the people of the West Coast that they could be discriminated against so much.

When my colleague opposite got up a few minutes ago and spoke of the investment they made into the pulp and paper industry in this Province – and I congratulate them for investing into the Corner Brook mill, but I think it is very clear when the Premier of this Province got up and said that no mills would close under his watch – how many mills have closed since this government has taken over? We have two mills closed already in a few twelve years. Mr. Speaker, if that is great planning, God help bad planning.

Many promises were made about the start dates of the hospital and these were made through several elections. None – none – of them has ever been realized. If any of the members opposite would take the time the next time you are in Corner Brook and go to the back of the

hospital that is there and see the crumbling infrastructure that is above your head, that they have wire up to catch in case it falls on people and vehicles below, you would see why there would be concern that this thing should never have been an election promise and it should have moved forward.

They failed to organize and meet with any of the residents in a public forum to hear their concerns. There has been no participation by any government member in any of the public forums that were held. I would encourage the Member for Humber West to get out and meet with the people in Corner Brook on the concerns that they have with the hospital and the lack of the progress in Humber East. The minister has not gone out and met with these people. The only thing he can do is get on the telephone once in a while and defend the broken promises.

Mr. Speaker, early on when this hospital was under planning stages – and it appears it still is, if you can believe it – they said that a PET scanner would not be viable; you could not do it at the Corner Brook hospital. They said that a radiation bunker could not be put in the Corner Brook hospital. I have to stand here today and congratulate a colleague of mine who fought – and it was the Liberal Party who actually pulled together the report to demonstrate to this government that a PET scanner and indeed radiation bunkers were needed in the Corner Brook hospital. It was the Member for Bay of Islands who fought long and hard to see that happen and years to complete the design and functional plan unfortunately are still not ready. If you can believe eight years into the process and they have still not had a functional plan to release to the public officially.

We look at the latest announcement by the government in that they are planning to go with P3s. That is relatively new when it comes to long-term care and it is certainly new for this Province. How can a government get up and say, yes, we are going to introduce this now, without first consulting with the people and, indeed, telling all of the members of this Legislature the benefits or the pros and the cons of going with private enterprise to work on this facility?

There have been no start-up date for the construction of the hospital and this project. There is no comfort, Mr. Speaker, none whatsoever for the people of Corner Brook, or Western Newfoundland, given the history that this government has had with their record on the hospital and, indeed, their record on the broken promises to the people on the West Coast. It is very important. I had calls yesterday, as I was heading to a function, from people who are saying listen, I have travelled five times to St. John's only to find out that my surgery has been cancelled. These people are concerned on the West Coast, and rightfully so.

When we look at the promised long-term care facility – and I am going to concentrate on a few of them. I took ten minutes to discuss the hospital so I certainly will not get down through this, but let's look at the long-term care facility. The first mistake that was made is when they built the present facility at 100 beds, they did not build the number of beds that was actually called for in the report. Now what we have are long-term beds – our acute care beds tied up into the hospital that is costing the government thousands of dollars a day because of poor planning that was done in the first place.

Now we have to start all over again. We have to build again. I think it is evident that this government has a long history of poor planning and if all else fails, let's take it to study so we can delay it a little bit longer. It is not just the hospital in Corner Brook, Mr. Speaker, and the long-term care. It is a whole range of issues they have neglected to live up to, even though their promises have been made.

Consequently, with the poor planning of the original long-term care beds, the acute beds have been occupied at Western Memorial Hospital with long-term care patients. It is adding tremendous costs to our health care system. I guess this is a case, as the old saying goes, we were penny-wise and pound foolish.

To continue on, as a result of these beds tied up, surgeries have been postponed due to the lack of beds for patients. So it has been delay after delay in the start-up of construction. This has been the theme, in my opinion of this government, is that it is all to do with delay. We are not being fair to the people of the West

Coast because of the long wait for this. The only thing we have to show for it is a nice grassy field to walk your dog. This government, certainly in my opinion, has lost its trust with the people on the West Coast and it is certainly a disappointment to see that this has not continued.

The latest announcement project is just yet another delay in the construction at the long-term care facility. Yet, the minister says it will open a year earlier than anticipated. Well, what year that will be is anyone's guess. Unfortunately, it is the people of the West Coast who are left suffering as a result of poor action or poor planning on the part of this government.

It is amazing that I can look at this and I cannot see any date in the short term of when this project will be completed. There is, I think, \$9 million more in the Budget this year for construction. Unfortunately, that is not going to cut it on an \$800 million project.

We do not even have a functional plan for the hospital. We do not have a functional plan for the long-term care unit; yet, we have seen up to today something in the area of \$40 million spent and an open field. It is reckless, in my opinion, to be playing games, number one, with the taxpayers' money of this Province and indeed reckless to the residents of Corner Brook and the West Coast in the lack of support they have gotten for this facility.

I know when I went knocking on doors back a few months ago, as I knocked on the doors you could see the frustration. People were quite open and honest about their frustration because of the planning and the lack of action on this particular project.

So with every delay, the costs of the building of this facility continue to rise. It is too bad the construction on the Corner Brook hospital had not begun when it was first promised.

MR. HILLIER: Or second promised.

MR. FLYNN: Or second promised. Imagine the millions of dollars that would have been saved for today and certainly into the future. Again, it is a theme of one broken promise after another.

I could not help but make a note when the Member for Humber West got up a few minutes ago and talked about the water plant that I had the privilege of attending with him in Corner Brook. The cost overrun went quite significantly. Unlike the City of St. John's, that has money funnelled through another project and water in Bay Bulls, the people in Corner Brook never got covered for their overages out there. I think that is unfortunate.

Let's talk about the opening of the Corner Brook Intermediate school because I think that is another interesting one. Parents and students of Corner Brook Intermediate were misled by this government with a promise that a new intermediate school would open this past academic year. It was first promised in September, then it was promised in December, and then it was promised in Easter. Unfortunately, the Easter Bunny did not deliver the golden egg.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. FLYNN: Fair, tell the people, tell me now, when will the school open? I think that is important to know.

Promises to open the new facility kept getting pushed ahead as each proposed date drew nearer. It reached a point where the opening of the school year now projected in 2015 is a year later than was originally proposed. There is no confirmed certainty that this is going to actually happen in 2015. The kids and the parents are still unaware of when this will happen.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the orientation session for Grade 6, which was supposed to enter the Corner Brook Intermediate this coming fall, actually took place in the facility that they are now proposing to move them out of.

AN HON. MEMBER: No. What?

MR. FLYNN: Yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is shameful.

MR. FLYNN: It is shameful.

It is unfortunate that this thing has gone on so long. Some parents, especially those from the

former Presentation School, are very displeased that their children were not left to attend their former school, at least temporarily, for this part in 2014-2015.

They do not believe the Department of Education did not know that the new intermediate school would not be ready for this year. Fact; the parents do not believe that the Department of Education did not know that the school would not open this year. It is important that the minister confirm the intermediate students in Corner Brook with the facts and give them proper and up-to-date information because they are still wondering if the school will open in 2015-2016 at the new facility.

At the present time there are reports that – and I am just repeating people who are up at the school visiting. At present time there are reports that no work is actually occurring at the new school building. Rumor has it that there are problems with the gym floor and the contracting company is seeking cost overruns for compensation. This is a rumor. I think it is important that the Minister of Education stand up with some certainty and clear up this misunderstanding with the parents of Corner Brook.

Grade 6 students, who supposedly will be attending the new intermediate school in September, are in fact completing their orientation session at a temporary building this spring. There has not been much work going on at the site in Corner Brook for months now.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion here – because I will come back to more broken promises at some point when I deliver my next presentation – the history of broken promises by this government to the people of the West Coast is shameful. They deserve more. I understand their frustration, I have worked with them. Truthfully, it is time to come clean on some of the issues that I raised here today about the long delays in projects that have been promised to the West Coast, but have not been delivered, as were most things over the past few years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

MR. FLYNN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to bring the debate to an end now.

We are moving into Estimates today again. Just a reminder that the Resource Committee will meet in the House of Assembly to review the Estimates of the Department of Environment and Conservation and Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

As well, a reminder that tomorrow morning, May 12, the Social Services Committee will meet in the House at 9:00 to review the Estimates of the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

With that, I move, seconded by the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

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