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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.

I would like to welcome everybody back for another week of debate in the House of Assembly.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we are going to hear members' statements from members representing the Districts of Burgeo – La Poile, Baie Verte – Springdale, Virginia Waters, St. John's North, Mount Pearl South, and Bonavista South.

The hon. the Member for the District of Burgeo – La Poile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise today to recognize and commend the Occupational Health and Safety Committee, of Marine Atlantic Inc.'s Port aux Basques terminal, on receiving the Committee of the Year Award for the second time. The award was presented at the annual Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health and Safety Conference on May 14 in Gander.

To be eligible for this award the committee must promote health and safety awareness programs, hold regular meetings, perform workplace inspections, listen to worker concerns, identify aspects of the workplace that may be unhealthy or unsafe, and make recommendations to management for possible improvements.

The committee says "safety is the priority of Marine Atlantic and they have been instrumental in changing the safety culture at Marine Atlantic to ensure all employees remain safe."

Committee members include: Terry Anderson, Betty Lynn Battiste, Tammy Buckhurst, Eric Davis, Gwen Davis, Bob Green, Robert Horwood, Tony Jeans, Dave Keats, Carolann Keough, Cara Leamon, Brad Matthews, Darryl Matthews, Dave Mauger, Sheldon Ryles, Ross

Skinner, Dave Stockley, Sharmaine Strickland, and Basil Taylor.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in congratulating the Occupational Health and Safety Committee of Marine Atlantic Inc.'s Port aux Basques terminal on a job well done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Springdale Bravettes under-20 female hockey team, who competed in the B division for the provincial championship. Hosted by Rocky Harbour on the weekend of March 27-29, the provincial tournament was comprised of four teams.

The nail-biting victory in double overtime over the host squad gave the Bravettes the coveted gold medal. It was a hard-fought battle said head coach, Dave Edison.

Members of the team, which include the Baie Verte system, are: Brittany Andrews, Kristie Macdonald, Robyn Rideout, Chelsea Regular, Ami Welsh, Lashonda Roberts, Emily Edison, Brittany Mckay, Taylor Mackay, Emily Chislett, Tara Traverse, Kelsie Parsons, Summer Barrett, and Allie Saunders.

Coaches Dave Edison and Bob Rideout are to be commended for guiding the team to another solid provincial championship.

It is interesting to note that the core members of this team competed in all the provincial championship divisions as they progressed through the minor hockey system: the under twelve, under fifteen, and now under twenty.

In all three provincial divisional championships, the exceptional team amassed a total of six

medals. It took skill, dedication, and hard work to accomplish this.

Please join me in applauding a unique team for such an extraordinary performance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Jocelyn Greene, former Executive Director of Stella Burry Community Services.

Ms Greene was recently awarded the Order of Canada for her work in transforming Emmanuel House residential treatment program into Stella's Circle, one of the largest social enterprises in the Province. Stella's Circle helps over 800 people annually overcome challenges of literacy, issues of physical and mental health, as well as incarceration.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing Ms Greene, her work, and her inspiration and even more importantly her results which have helped hundreds of women and men to overcome challenges in their lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, on February 28, fifty-four students from across Newfoundland and Labrador gathered at the Holy Heart Theatre in St. John's to take part in *The Telegram* newspaper's annual Spelling Bee.

The Telegram Spelling Bee is an excellent opportunity for students to showcase their academic skills, their spelling ability, their ability to think on their feet under pressure, and their confidence in speaking before an audience.

This year's competition featured four students from the District of St. John's North. Leary's Brook Junior High Grade 7 students Owen Cumby and Dylan March took part, as well as two students from St. Andrew's Elementary, Grade 5 student Cassandra Kennedy and Grade 6 student Luesma Fully.

Each of these students took the opportunity to demonstrate their talents at the highest level of competition in Newfoundland and Labrador, with Luesma Fully lasting the longest – an impressive nine rounds of competition.

Special congratulations are in order for overall winner Greta Warner, a student at Bishop Field, who will represent the Province at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. next week.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating all participants of the 2015 *Telegram* Spelling Bee.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House to recognize several outstanding young people in my community. The twenty-sixth Annual Mount Pearl Focus on Youth Awards was a tremendous success and highlighted the great talent, athleticism, and intellectual ability possessed by some very amazing youth.

These individuals included: Mount Pearl Female Youth of the Year, Noubahar Hasnain; Male Youth of the Year, Harrison Latham; Youth Volunteer of the year, Cassandra Chislett; Male Youth Speak-off award winner, Ryan McDonald; Female Youth Speak-off award winner, Victoria Jackman; STEM Award winner for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, Lauren Coombs; Male Youth Athlete of the Year, Liam Hickey; Female Youth Athlete of the Year, Emily Bailey; Youth Sports Team of the Year, the Mount Pearl Minor Basketball Girls Under-14 Celtics Team; Official of the Year, Jeff Butler.

RNC Youth in Service Award winner, Emily Gallant; Youth Group of the Year, the O'Donel Patriot Mentors; Performing Arts Individual Award winner, Jenny Mallard; Performing Arts Group Recognition Award Winners, the O'Donel Jazz Band, Mount Pearl Show Choir, *Etcetera 28: True Colours* Cast and Crew, the Mount Pearl Senior High Drama Club, and the Cast and Crew of O'Donel High School's *Sound of Music*; Visual Arts Award winner, Sarah Hiscock; and Literary Arts Award winner, Breanna Sheppard.

One of our tremendous adult community volunteers, Mr. Brian Hunt, was also recognized at the gala and awarded the Adult Volunteer Working with Youth in Sport Award.

I would ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating all of these individuals on their accomplishments. Our future is in good hands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Honourable colleagues, I rise today to recognize and congratulate the Silver Rockers who are members of the Silver Wings Skating Club from Bonavista on winning the gold medal at the Provincial Synchronized Skating Championships in the Beginner I category. This competition was held at the Eastlink Event Centre in Clarenville on February 7, 2015.

The Rockers were the only team that represented the Bonavista club and this is only the second year that the team has competed. When they are on the ice, the team members, who range in age from eight to twelve years, demonstrate unison, teamwork, dedication, and emotion. In order for these young skaters to compete, they have to depend on each other and when they step on the ice they are one, they move as one, and they succeed as one.

The members of the Silver Rockers are: Hailey Maloney, Bailey Hayward, Madison Elliott, Jordyn Piercey, Patricia Maloney, Michaela Butler, Jennifer Hiscock, Emma Butler, Klaire Hayward, Natalee Chaulk, and Sarah Boyce. The coach is Brittney Baril and team manager is Wendy Maloney.

Mr. Speaker, Members of the House of Assembly, please join me in congratulating the Silver Rockers on bringing the gold medal home to Bonavista.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update this hon. House on the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group meetings which I had the pleasure to attend in Yellowknife last week. Provincial and territorial ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, along with leaders of national Aboriginal organizations gathered to work together to improve opportunities for First Nation, Inuit and Metis people throughout Canada.

At this meeting, Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs from across the country and leaders from the five national Aboriginal organizations engaged in discussions, heard from a number of informative presenters, and endorsed recommendations on important issues such as education, economic development, housing, ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls, disaster mitigation, and emergency management in Aboriginal communities.

Mr. Speaker, one of the key topics of our meeting was discussing the outcomes of the first National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls which was held in Ottawa on February 27. Last week, all leaders

in attendance called on the federal government to join in the development and implementation of a prevention and awareness campaign aimed at ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls. We also continue to call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Personally, I want to take this moment to acknowledge and remember Bernice Rich and Loretta Saunders as two of my reasons for supporting an inquiry.

The provincial government has worked hard to support an end to violence against Aboriginal women and children and we continue to provide support for violence prevention projects sponsored by Aboriginal governments and organizations through the Aboriginal Women's Violence Prevention Grants Program.

Mr. Speaker, the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group also discussed and acknowledged the barriers which Aboriginal women face in gender equality, education, and workplace opportunities, and the need to continue work for the development of a Socio-Economic Action Plan for Aboriginal Women. In addition, leaders considered work completed on the issue of Aboriginal children in care with a view to reducing the number of children in care and improving their outcomes.

In July, Premiers and National Aboriginal Organizations leaders will meet in Happy Valley-Goose Bay to discuss the recommendations from this Yellowknife meeting. I look forward to welcoming the leaders of our country to the Big Land and to showcase the famous Labrador hospitality.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important that all of us work together to further support and ensure a stronger future for Aboriginal communities across this Province and this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls should be a priority for all levels of government across Canada. That is why we, too, support the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women. It is a shame that the Conservative government in Ottawa continues to ignore the request.

While this government advocates for such an inquiry, it is this same government that has been operating without an up-to-date violence prevention action plan for three years. It is this same government that two years ago cancelled the Family Violence Intervention Court when they should have spent the last two years expanding it. Now in Budget 2015, they are committed to exploring a domestic violence court model for Labrador with a total investment of \$100,000 that will serve the Aboriginal people of Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the commitment is only to a model, but how much longer will the people of Labrador have to wait before they actually have access to a domestic violence court?

We also believe it is important that all of us work together to further support and ensure a stronger future for the Aboriginal communities across this Province and country, but if we believe that then we should also be prepared to put the necessary resources in place to support it.

Thank you, 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.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. It is good to get an update on the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group and to hear that it was addressing the findings of the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

It is important to call on the federal government to help implement a prevention and awareness campaign, but a campaign will only go so far in

ending the violence. A national inquiry is the highest priority for Aboriginal organizations and communities.

When the minister talks about continuing to call for a national inquiry, I would like to know specifically what he means. I would also like to know when was the last time he wrote a letter to the federal minister calling for a national inquiry, and I would like to know when they are going to tell us what really is going to happen with regard to the Family Violence Intervention Courts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge important initiatives underway in Newfoundland and Labrador to help deter potential offenders from dumping their garbage at unauthorized sites throughout the Province.

Recently, the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board and Crime Stoppers established a new partnership and public awareness campaign to encourage residents to take an active role in protecting their communities by reporting suspicious activity.

Mr. Speaker, in this Province and across the country, illegal dumping is a serious and unnecessary problem that can pollute land and water, negatively impact wildlife, and lead to substantial clean-up costs; but this is an offence that can easily be avoided by properly disposing of items through municipal collection services, recycling programs, special collection events, and public drop-off facilities.

MMSB and Crime Stoppers are sending a clear message that illegal dumping is a crime and that anyone can safely and anonymously report suspicious activity by calling, emailing, or texting Crime Stoppers. As summer approaches, we encourage all Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians to keep this message top of mind. Whether you are at the cabin, camping, or exploring one of our many beautiful trails, if you see something, say something.

It is also important for people to realize that tossing items to the side of the road is an act of illegal dumping that can prove to be a safety hazard for other motorists and also for the crews who must collect them. We remind everyone to dispose of the garbage and the old household items in a responsible and appropriate manner. We all share responsibility to protect our environment, and also to be mindful of the safety of crews and fellow motorists.

Mr. Speaker, the Crime Stoppers public awareness campaign builds on the Illegal Dumping Surveillance Program, implemented by MMSB and the Town of Conception Bay South, to provide participating communities with technology and training to implement effective surveillance and enforcement programs within their jurisdictions.

To date, fifteen municipalities have implemented surveillance programs that have resulted in more than thirty charges being laid and over twenty-five convictions. While illegal dumping continues to present a significant threat to our environment, we are pleased to see how partnerships between government, municipalities, and law enforcement are working to help effect positive change and protect our communities.

Mr. Speaker, it is through an integrated approach that includes targeted enforcement, community engagement and public education that we will combat illegal dumping. I encourage all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to take an active role. Together, we can make a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement, and we certainly must combat illegal dumping in the Province. It is a good

partnership between the MMSB and Crime Stoppers, but the Province is certainly late coming to the game and that this matter of illegal dumping has been really spearheaded by municipalities with the capacity.

The minister raised the issue and highlighted – I would like to highlight as well – the Town of CBS, Conception Bay South, as a shining example of showing great leadership. There is a further opportunity to expand with and work with regional services boards like NorPen and those that exist on the Burin and Bonavista Peninsulas.

We have to look at the real mismanagement in the waste management strategy when we look at what my colleague for the Bay of Islands has been raising around the West Coast and Don Downer and the waste management plan. There is lots of money that has been spent and little activity.

Towns, local service districts, and other communities are worried about increased illegal dumping, especially on the West Coast when fees will sharply rise because garbage has to be shipped to Central; as far as St. Anthony and Port aux Basques to Central Newfoundland and Labrador. Labrador will see even further challenges, given its geographical location.

There has been lots of money that has been spent but we need to certainly see better results when it comes to this government and the leadership role that it plans to take.

I commend the municipalities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

I am pleased to hear of this partnership to raise public awareness of the damages caused by illegal dumping and littering. It will be a new

means to encourage people to become more active as environmental stewards in their communities and it will help raise awareness that illegal dumping and littering should be taken more seriously.

Mr. Speaker, recent media stories about all of the refuse still found in our woods and open areas indicate that we have a major cultural problem. We need the government involved with everybody else in an aggressive, targeted, education campaign in our communities and schools, and more enforcement to change that culture.

I applaud the municipalities and the organizations for their efforts to end illegal dumping and I urge more involvement of the provincial government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

As part of an agreement to ship unprocessed fish, OCI was to employ 110 people in their Fortune fish plant for full-time processing jobs; however, it is now reported that more than 100 employees have not worked since last December.

I ask the Premier: Why aren't the terms of the agreement you signed with OCI not being followed?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I had officials speak to OCI officials this morning. They

informed me, as they did in the last couple of weeks, that the plant will be open in June for twenty weeks or more this particular year. As I said in the House of Assembly before, we will hold OCI accountable to the agreements that they have signed with the government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to talk to officials at the company, it is another thing to do something for the people of Fortune. This agreement was signed in December 2012. The media release at the time highlighted one of the requirements was a minimum of 110 full-time processing positions for a minimum of five years.

I ask the Premier: You have a responsibility here, why aren't you making this company live up to its commitments?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, again, I said I had officials speak to OCI this morning. I have met with the union. I have met with union officials from Fortune and from the company. We are trying our darnedest to make sure OCI upholds to the standards by which it was signed in the agreement.

I understand there are two ships at sea right now, Mr. Speaker. The reports coming back is that the fish caught are all small sized. It has only been in the last two or three days that the amount of volume that is coming in over the side has actually increased, and the size of the fish is actually increasing. The company has agreed that they would have at least twenty weeks of work starting the first week of June this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will ask the minister: Is twenty weeks the way you interpret this agreement with OCI? Because it speaks to something very different than that when you read through the document.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, again, I say that I spoke to the company – working with the company, working with the officials of the union, working with head office of the union here in St. John's. We will hold the company accountable for the agreements which they signed. Sometimes it takes time, depending on the amount of fish that is being caught, the amount of fish and the quality of the fish that is coming over the side with regard to the kinds of fish that you can process in the particular plant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, the company this morning said to me, reinforced to me that they would have twenty weeks work starting in June. We continue to work with the company. We continue to work with officials and the people of Fortune.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, holding somebody accountable is more than just a phone call to a company when you are talking about people's jobs and livelihoods at stake in Fortune, I say, Mr. Speaker.

After this government's botched expropriation of the Abitibi mill in Grand Falls-Windsor and hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayers' money spent, demolition of the mill was set to begin. Government has said that taxpayers are not on the hook for dismantling the mill and that

a private company has paid \$500,000 to government.

I ask the Premier: Since taxpayers are still responsible for the environmental liabilities at the mill, how much are they actually on the hook for?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition did bring up the point that we have a very unique contract here with Delson International around the integrity of taking down that historic piece of property out there, at no cost, Mr. Speaker, I might note, to the taxpayers. Also, it will generate some revenue.

What we will do, once the piece of property is taken down to ground level, we will be working with the municipalities and the stakeholders to determine what is the best use of that land, Mr. Speaker. Once that is identified, then we will know exactly what the remediation costs or what it is we have to do to make sure that that is a useable piece of property for the people of this great Province.

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 remind the Premier and the minister that this is not a unique contract; this is something that has been done in other Atlantic Provinces, even we have seen it in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Last week when talking about environmental liabilities at the former Abitibi site, the minister said that all the work has been done.

I ask the Premier: If all the work is done, why are you not telling the people of the Province

how much they will have to pay for this botched expropriation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Again, Mr. Speaker, like I said last week in the House of Assembly, this report will go forward to the Auditor General and they will have a look at that – his office will have a look at that. They will determine whether or not there are any liabilities. We will not make that determination as a department. It will be up to them to make that determination, Mr. Speaker. We will know in the next little while exactly what that document will show.

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.

What I think I just heard the minister say, what he did say, was this was up to Auditor General to determine the level of liability for this Province. I just need clarification on that. Is that what the minister just said?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, there is a level of scrutiny under the general accounting accepted principles that are involved here, and it would be the Auditor General to determine, from practices, what is a liability and what is not a liability.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I understand the AG says the liability should be recorded.

Mr. Speaker, two months ago government called the former Abitibi mill a \$100 million asset that the people would have. Now with the \$500,000 from the company that the minister just spoke about and 75 per cent of the sales of scrap, I ask the Premier: Given that you now claim that this is a \$100 million asset, how much does his government plan to collect from this demolition?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I outlined earlier, \$500,000 is a cheque in hand; it is what the company has paid us as the initial payment for the demolition of that. Once it is realized, after the costing of the demolition, we get 75 per cent of all materials and equipment that is sold on the market, which is being handled by Delson International. We have people on site to assess exactly the values. We will get 75 per cent of those dollars that will come back to the taxpayers of this Province.

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.

One of the questions that are on the minds of people in Central Newfoundland is about the timber resources. It has been almost six years since the Abitibi expropriation and well over a year since government announced they were negotiating with Rentech for the development of the Central and Northern Peninsula timber resources.

I ask the Premier: Why has the development of these resources been delayed for so long?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, it is recognized what the value of the timber resources in Central Newfoundland and the Northern Peninsula and the value of that for the industry. The industry is worth an incredible amount of money for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have been negotiating, as I said before, with Rentech for the resources out in Central Newfoundland. Those negotiations are continuing. As I said in the House a little while back, when we get to a point in time whereby there is agreement in principle and an agreement in place with Rentech, it will be announced here in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker. If we do not get to that level, we will announce that as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the forestry has not been a priority for this government for a number of years. The industry overview on the government's own website is from 2009, claiming that the industry is valued at \$250 million and 5,500 jobs. This was reiterated by government members in the Budget debate.

I ask the Minister of Forestry: When will you provide accurate job numbers and the industry's real value?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, my numbers indicate to me that the overall numbers associated with the forestry industry in the Province is 5,500 and the annual value of the forest industry is \$250 million.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, total GDP, including forestry and farming was projected at \$177 million in 2013, and 2014 employment at 2,200 person years. Budget documents reveal Corner Brook Pulp and Paper employs 550 full and casual workers at the paper mill, forest operations, and power plant.

I ask the minister: Is he able to account for the remaining 5,000 forestry jobs to this House, and why does our renewable forest sector only get two sentences in the Budget?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods sector.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, it is a good question.

Again, my numbers indicate 5,500 associated with the forestry industry jobs in the Province at a value of \$250 million. If he wants me to stand on the floor of the House of Assembly and indicate where all 5,500 jobs are in the Province, Mr. Speaker, I cannot do that right now, but if he wants me to table it I will get that information and table it to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, on March 25, I asked the Minister of Education if the promised Grades 5-7 school for Torbay would have to accommodate Grade 8 students, given the school district's decision to reconfigure the school to Grades 5-8. The minister said, no. I have a letter here, dated May 14, from the Chair of the English School District which contradicts that response from the minister.

I ask the acting minister: Who is telling the truth here, your government or Milton Peach, your appointed school district Chair?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: In your comments you are obviously very supportive of the school board and the chair, which should be duly noted.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, what our government has done here is looked at our Budget this year and looked at the many challenges in our education system, particularly around capacity issues in the Northeast Avalon region. What we have done here, Mr. Speaker, is awarded a tender to build a brand new school in Torbay, a Grades 5-7 school –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: – acknowledging, Mr. Speaker, that there is potential down the road, possibly five years down the road, where you could see added pressures on that enrolment, where we may have to add an extension to the building, but right now, with the support of the school board, we are investing millions of dollars for the kids in Torbay and really proud to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the acting minister has now acknowledged what the chair of the school district has told me, is that the school district has already placed a request for expansion of the new Torbay school to accommodate Grade 8 students before it is even built, before the tender is even awarded. That means more portable classrooms crammed on to new school grounds as we have seen this government do in the past.

I ask now, Mr. Speaker, how much will taxpayers now be on the hook for because government botched another school project, even before the shovels hit the ground?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, my critic wants to stand over there and play politics with a decision around building a brand new 5 to 7 school, but the reality is that decision is supported by the school board. Not only that; not only do they support – read the note.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: Not only do they support a Grades 5-7 school acknowledging capacity issues in the next five years, the reality is we could put money in to deal with the expansion for the next five years while some other kids in other schools do not have a classroom to go to. That is not the decision we are going to make.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: As I said, Mr. Speaker, I have the letter here contradicting what the minister told me here this –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: Private members do not do that, Mr. Speaker.

The school board decided to change the plan for the Torbay school last September. Four months later, in January, this government issued a tender for a school that is already too small before it is even built, before the tender is even awarded. Now the school board chair says they are asking for a building extension even before the construction begins.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: You had four months from September to January to get this tender right.

How come you cannot get it right? In four months you could not get it straight.

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

MR. DALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is absolutely right. The work was done on a 5 to 7 school, the planning was done, and the board in looking at their long term, Mr. Speaker, recognized there could be capacity issues in five years' time. Acknowledged by the board, acknowledged by the department, but the reality is the board does not want delays in building a 5 to 7 school. They do not want delays. I can tell you, contrary to the critic, the parents in Torbay and the kids in Torbay do not want delays.

The other reality that we have to face, we are not going to put money into a building that is going to sit there for five years with empty space when we have kids who do not have a classroom to go to in September.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I have a letter here dated May 14 from the minister's appointed school board chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: It says, the board of trustees has requested to the provincial government that an expansion take place so the school can accommodate Grades 5-8 students. That is not what the minister said here in the House. Government is spending millions of dollars to build a school that they themselves acknowledge now is too small. Taxpayers will be on the hook in a year or two now –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Taxpayers are going to be on the hook because government bungled yet another tender.

I ask the minister: You had four months to get this right, why wasn't this new tender done right from the beginning and save taxpayers of this Province the money that they deserve to be saved, and give kids in that community a school that is big enough to go to?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, a couple of points; whether it is built today or built five years from now, the taxpayers are on the hook for it. The taxpayers are not going to put money into an empty building that is not going to be used for five years when we have kids who do not have a classroom to go to. The taxpayers are paying today or in five years' time. It is a very week argument.

The other reality, Mr. Speaker, this is not botched, this is planned. The reality is in five years' time –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: – when we need an extension, we will deal with it. The member says there are capacity issues. We are building 5 to 7, Mr. Speaker. There is no crammed space. There will be enough room for Grades 5-7. He wants the Grade 8s to come back and go to a Grades 5-7 school. It does not happen anywhere on the planet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the use of electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes has become mainstream. A 2015 survey shows that 20 per cent of Canadian youth have tried or are actively using e-cigarettes and they are considered a gateway to traditional smoking. Currently, there are no regulations in this Province about the sale or use of e-cigarettes. A Grade 6 student could purchase them if they wanted.

I ask the minister: Are you planning on introducing legislation to regulate e-cigarettes in this Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very serious issue raised by the member opposite. We are fully aware of the seriousness of this and the implications that it has on our young people and people of all ages and members of our population.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, for some months now we have been reviewing this particular matter. We have been looking at options for legislation. We have reviewed what other jurisdictions are doing. Our plan is to bring forward legislation to the House of Assembly when we have completed our comprehensive review of the entire circumstance. It is a serious matter. The health of young people is serious. The health of our population is serious.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization says regulations need to be put in place. The CMA wants a ban on the sale of all e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of eighteen. The federal government's March 2015 report wants it banned again to people under the age of eighteen and to prohibit their use in public buildings. Nova Scotia has already regulated them; BC, Ontario, and Quebec are all following suit.

I ask the Premier: You say you are going to bring legislation; I would ask you when will this legislation be brought to the House?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the member opposite referenced there are a variety of views across the country on strength of regulations, how strong they should be, what age groups they should impact, and how they should be implemented. Mr. Speaker, we are reviewing all of that. We want to have the best legislation for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the best regulations for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with top of mind at all time is the health of our population, our young people and adults alike, Mr. Speaker.

We are doing that work. We are doing jurisdictional scans. When we have that completed and we have a framework for legislation, we will be bringing it forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week I asked the Minister of Health about privacy breaches. The most recent incident involved a dairy farmer who ended up with someone else's health records. Such breaches are happening throughout all of government, not just Health – motor registration, wildlife, Justice, Advanced Education and Skills, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and workers' compensation.

I ask the Premier: When can we expect a government-wide effort to bring these kinds of serious privacy breaches to an end?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, as I outlined last week and on previous occasions in this House, privacy breaches whenever they occur, no matter whether they are deemed to be small or large, they all need to be taken extremely seriously, they need to be acted upon, they need to be reported to the ATIPP office, and also to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. They are all investigated.

It is critical that we do the appropriate follow-up and that we review practices and protocols within departments and agencies to make sure all the steps are being taken to avoid any kind of privacy breach.

We are showing leadership on this issue, Mr. Speaker. Privacy breaches are inevitable. Human error does occur from time to time. It needs to be dealt with seriously. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have brought in the best Access to Information and Protection of Privacy legislation anywhere in the country; it is among the best in the world. We are going to continue to show leadership on this issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, there are all kinds of breaches involving this government; even our IT operations are vulnerable. A study conducted on our computer systems by EWA Ltd. showed that we did not have a proper incident response procedure in place if someone attempted to hack into our computer system.

I ask the minister: What action have you taken to ensure this flaw to our computer security procedures has been corrected?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister just indicated the security breaches is one of these things that we often find ourselves experiencing, but one of the things that we always learn from those experiences,

Mr. Speaker. Having a system that is going to be completely foolproof – I do not think any of us should be naïve enough to think that all of our systems are going to be constantly foolproof.

With the advances in technology, hackers, and others will be able to get into systems as they change, Mr. Speaker. The critical thing for us, though, is to be constantly aware of changes that are occurring, constantly upgrading our systems, reviewing processes, reviewing procedures, and responding too. We bring in companies like the opposite member identified a moment ago. We bring in experts periodically to do vulnerability assessments. We learn from that and implement the necessary change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, Anderson Vacations recently published a Canada-Alaska travel guide where major tourist towns in Newfoundland and Labrador are located on a map of Cape Breton Island.

I ask the minister: Is your department aware of this mistake, and have you discussed this problem with the Canadian-based travel specialist?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: It is not difficult to figure out a map of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. No, I am not aware. It is the first I heard of it. I would assume none of my officials would be aware or else they would have briefed me on it. So there have been no discussions.

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, revenues to the tune of a billion dollars in the tourism industry is at stake. We have invested millions in advertising in Canadian markets, yet travel specialists cannot even get our location right.

What steps is the department taking to ensure this kind of sloppy mistake does not happen again in the future?

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 I said a few moments ago, we were not aware of the incident until the member raised it here on the floor of the House. So we have not taken any steps to rectify it.

I would hardly go so far as to classify a mistake by a particular advertising company as critical of a billion-dollar industry, Mr. Speaker. We have invested significantly in tourism advertising and marketing in this Province, and have marketed some very good campaigns that have provided very good dividends to the businesses in the Province.

If the member would be so kind as to provide me with the information after Question Period, I will certainly follow up and see if we can have our staff rectify the problem. Clearly, it is not government's issue; it is a mistake made by a provider of some vacation packages.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The renovation to the Confederation Building to put the blue windows on is now in excess of \$56 million. We also know that there has been structural work done to the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors that is not included in that price.

I ask the minister: What is the total cost of the structural work to the eighth, ninth, and tenth floor, including all cosmetic work done to those floors?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I need to clarify; the initial contract and bid for the windows was \$20 million. When that work began, we were notified by the contractor that we had run into some structural issues. There were some very alarming issues around the structure of this building and how work itself, fifty years ago, was not up to par.

What we endeavoured then to do with the contractor was to rectify that, bring this building, the people's building, back to where it is acceptable, is a good working environment, and it represents democracy to the people of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, that whole package comes to \$56 million, which includes the mason work that is being done, steel structure, some electrical work, and the windows itself.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Last week, I attended a town hall at memorial where student after student in a full house said government's decision to cut \$20 million from MUN's budget resulting in a government-directed hike in tuition for international and graduate students and a \$1,000 hike in resident fees will cause them to quit their studies here.

I ask the Premier: Does he know that 40 per cent of the students and residents are from rural Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I am quite aware of the student population at Memorial University. I can tell you that for

those Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and domestic students who attend memorial, they currently enjoy a 60 per cent tuition freeze or 60 per cent lower than the Canadian average, Mr. Speaker. It is the best in the country.

Our aim and goal is to provide an opportunity for continued high-quality work and delivery of education that memorial provides. We have done that year after year after year.

I can tell you that, for me, for one, I am very proud of the work that Memorial University does, as well as the College of the North Atlantic. We all know and we all believe that they provide a fine product to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: Does he have any idea of the impact on rural students and their families of an extra \$1,000 to live in residence at our university?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly am, and I am quite aware of the compensation package and cost to students from Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada, as well as international students. We have what is a very competitive package, especially for our own domestic students, Mr. Speaker. We are leading the country in moving loans to grants.

Starting this fall, when new students enter Memorial University, they are going to be able to obtain an education – when eligible and meet the requirements – without having a loan. It will be provided through grants to those students. That is leading edge.

We are providing great products to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as well as visitors or students who come to Newfoundland

and Labrador to enjoy a great education, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He is happy to penalize students from rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to know, what analysis does he have showing the 30 per cent tuition hike will not result in the loss of students at MUN?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, for domestic students, the tuition freeze created – about \$335 million has been invested by this government since 2005 to ensure the continuation of the tuition freeze. It is the lowest in the country, 60 per cent of the Canadian average. For international students, Mr. Speaker, they actually pay approximately 80 per cent lower than the Canadian average to receive an education here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, people come to Newfoundland and Labrador and come to Memorial University because they are going to receive a quality education. That is going to continue. We are going to continue to support Memorial University and it will continue to be the fine institution that it currently is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, it has been six weeks since Mr. Donald Dunphy was shot and killed in his home by a member of the Protective Services Unit. People are wondering what is happening with the investigation.

Given the magnitude of the situation, I ask the Premier: Does he know when this investigation

will be completed and made public to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, the incident the member raised indeed is very serious, as we have had considerable discussions here on the floor of the House of Assembly.

I cannot provide an update on the investigation. As I have said many times, repeatedly here, I am not engaged with the RCMP on daily investigations and their daily operational activities. As much as I can say is they are into a process that takes time. I do not think the RCMP has provided any definitive time frame. I would encourage the member to direct her questions that way. I do not have any information on that.

When the investigation is concluded, my understanding is the conclusion will be made public. A report will be sent to me by the medical examiner and we will go forward from there, as I have said many times, but I do not have daily operational knowledge of what is happening there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre has time for a very quick question.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Can he explain the policy of the PSU that would allow a plainclothes officer from the PSU of the Premier's Office to go to a citizen's private home unannounced and with no apparent provocation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety for a quick reply.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I cannot be any clearer than I have been over the last four weeks on that issue.

I am not prepared to entertain any discussion around what has happened in the particular incident raised here until such a time as the investigation has concluded and government determines whether or not there is action we need to take around an inquiry. The rest of any speculation and any discussion around what the member is raising here is better left for the police to conclude their investigation.

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.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the Public Tender Act, I hereby table reports of Public Tender Act exceptions for the months of January and February, 2015, as presented by the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I move the following motion, seconded by the Member for Bay of Islands:

WHEREAS government has made many expensive mistakes, which have cost taxpayers of this Province millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS the government has not provided leadership in establishing proper processes and management practices that would result in the prudent expenditure of tax dollars;

BE IT RESOLVED that this House of Assembly condemns the current government's wasteful, inept mismanagement of taxpayers' money.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to the Standing Orders, the motion just read by the member shall be the one to be debated tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before the hon. Minister of Transportation and Works begins, I would like to remind the minister in advance that when answering questions for which notice has been given a previous ruling setting precedent in the House is we allow two to four minutes to answer each question. If your answer requires information subsequent to that, then you are free to table it.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On a question posed by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile a couple of weeks ago when I spoke to the Budget around the investments we have made to our school system in this Province, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table information relevant to the costing around such things as roof repairs at Basque Memorial, a number of other ones, \$250,000 for roof repairs at St. Boniface in the member's own district. It is noted there, nearly \$100 million worth of investment in our school system.

I would like to table this for the review of the hon. member opposite, over \$100 million in school repairs and new schools in the last number of years. I table that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand and present this petition which comes to me today from different parts of the Province. I see signatures from Mount Pearl, Norris Arm, Botwood, Grand Falls-Windsor, Harbour Breton, Springdale, from various parts of the Province, from here to Central Newfoundland here on the Island.

People are really concerned that long-term care, which is part of our health care system, is going to fall into the hands of private operators because of the new policies of this government. We all know when operations are in the hands of private operators that the people running them, and rightly so, are there to make money. There is nothing wrong with that, except in the area of taking care of our senior citizens in long-term care who should be under our health care system, there should be no attempt to be making money on the backs of the people who need care.

As has been pointed out by many studies, it is proven in this country, and in more than this country but especially in this country, that the privatization of long-term care will result in lower standards of care for our seniors and those who need chronic care, Mr. Speaker. It is very disconcerting. Many things happen.

The petition mentions lower staffing. Well, lower staffing is not just an issue for the workers in terms of employment, it is an issue for the workers in terms also of being overstressed because of the understaffing, and it is an issue for those who need care. If there is understaffing, then our people in long-term care are not being cared for in the way that they should. As I pointed out last week, Mr. Speaker, different parts of the country have been referring to these issues.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

WHEREAS Route 2 on the Conception Bay South Bypass Road is the second busiest highway in the Province; and

WHEREAS we must ensure the safety of the residents who use the access road, especially when driving at night; and

WHEREAS brush clearing can reduce the risk to drivers from the local moose population;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to allocate funding to include brush clearing for the Manuels Access Road.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday morning was a beautiful sunny morning in Conception Bay South – my clock went off at around 7:00 – most mornings are like that in Conception Bay South. When I turned on the radio the first item on the news: two moose near Weir’s Pit on the bypass road. When I finished breakfast, the news cycle had come around again: two moose in the Weir’s Pit area on the Manuels Bypass Road.

Mr. Speaker, that morning 15,000 motorists saw those two moose on the highway near Weir’s Pit. This is the area that I have brought this petition forward in the past. This is the area where we know there are moose hanging out. We know there are moose there on a regular basis. The Department of Transportation and Works has signs there telling us that there are moose in the area.

This morning it was foggy. Those two moose are still in that area. Mr. Speaker, 15,000 people went by there this morning and nobody could see it. All a moose had to do was step out on the highway and we know what would have resulted.

Mr. Speaker, this is ongoing. It is an issue that we have had there for some time. We know that we have almost 30,000 people coming and going there on a regular basis. We know that moose come down through that gulch and we know that there are trees there that need to be taken out of the way.

Mr. Speaker, all I am asking is that in the next round of tenders that this area – from works, services and transportation – be included for brush clearing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS there is no cellphone coverage on Route 480; and

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

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the government to partner with the private sector to extend cellphone coverage along Route 480.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition I have entered on a number of occasions about a service that, again, many of us take for granted all across the Province. There are many pockets in the Province that are still underserved. Again, the reason I bring this forward is that we know that the Province has spent a significant amount of money when it comes to broadband coverage and has provided broadband coverage to rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

In fact, there was a group in my area, Burgeo Broadcasting System, that has taken advantage of that and has provided the service all across the Province. They are a great organization, and the fact that government has worked with them shows that they are willing to do what is needed and there is that partnership.

What we are suggesting is that these same groups, though, could provide cellphone

coverage in these areas. The technology has gotten much more affordable, much cheaper, and I know that it can happen and I know that the department is aware of it. Now unfortunately, I do not think Budget Estimates led us to believe that there was anything promised under this area for government this year, which is unfortunate; but again, I look forward to the minister addressing this at some point, perhaps during the Budget debate when he gets an opportunity to talk about the concerns that he deals with in his department. This is one he should deal with.

I have talked about it on a number of occasions, the different reasons that we need to have it. This is just one roadway, Route 480, but I have another one, Route 470, that is the same way. I am sure members on the other side as well as my colleagues all have the same areas. This is a problem that we should be able to fix. As time has passed, technology has gotten cheaper but the service is something that we need. It is a life-saving measure at this point.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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 residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS on average, there are over 700 moose-vehicle accidents in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador each year; and

WHEREAS approximately 10 per cent of those accidents result in serious injury or fatality; and

WHEREAS the moose-vehicle accident mitigation measures like moose fencing, brush cutting, and hunting quotas have reduced accidents in other provinces, in particular, New Brunswick;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase moose-

vehicle accident mitigation measures, including moose fencing, brush cutting, and increasing quotas, and to provide financial assistance to those most seriously injured as a result of said collisions.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am after bringing this petition here a number of times, and we all know the results of moose-vehicle accidents and collisions and what it entails. In some cases, death, and of course in other cases, people sent to wheelchairs. I do not think it is good enough.

I will say that at one point in time the government did try to do something with the moose sensors, but it was a failed project. I would suggest to government not only to do the brush cutting, but also look at areas – and I am sure we have people in the division of wildlife who know where those moose tend to hang to and where they mostly come out on the highways, and suggest to them, we say, of doing some tests on fencing, like they do in other provinces.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down on that note.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 438 is the primary highway for residents of Grandois, St. Julien's, and Croque; and

WHEREAS the current gravel road conditions are dangerous for travel, given size of potholes and debris embedded in the road; and

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

WHEREAS this is the primary link for residents to health care and essential services, and enhancement is needed for safety reasons;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to allocate funds under the provincial roads maintenance program to upgrade this section of Route 438.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to – I was in Main Brook on Saturday morning and I met with a number of constituents who are from Croque and St. Julien's and travel this thirty-kilometre gravel road on a regular basis. They highlight that since the flooding and the washout, there has been work done; but without proper equipment like a roller to actually push in the rock and things like that, the road is still in a deplorable and somewhat dangerous condition.

There needs to be real attention placed on gravel roads, particularly Route 438 and Route 434, and I have extended the invitation to the minister to come up and travel these routes and have direct dialogue with my constituents because it certainly is a serious matter and a petition that I have been raising in the House of Assembly for quite some time.

So I put that forward.

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.

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

MR. SPEAKER: We are resuming debate on Motion 1.

I recognize the hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

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

The Government House Leader is confusing you. He is playing with that crystal ball again. I wish he would not do that.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be able to speak to the Budget, as horrifying as the Budget is. The lines initially that I am drawn to in the Budget is when the government says, after they list the eight principles that are at the heart of the government's approach, the new long-term approach of the government that has been around for twelve years. First they say, "... we will take this year to deal with the immediate challenges we face because of the global decline in commodity prices and the consequent impact on our resources. We need to adjust our course accordingly to meet this new reality head-on, but we must be careful not to adjust the course so much that we create unintended negative impacts on our economy."

Mr. Speaker, then I went back and had a look. I wonder how much of a readjustment this is going to be over the last – let's say the last four years, if you go back and have a look at the Budget totals for the last four years. If you look at 2011 and 2012, government's gross expense was \$7.8 billion. Then the following year, 2012, it stepped up to \$7.83 billion. So another \$60-odd million more.

Then if you look at last year, it goes up again to \$7,888,000,000. In a year when we are facing absolute financial constraint with the low price of oil, the government decides to bring in a Budget that goes over \$8 billion. I am not sure how we have adjusted the course. It seems to me like our expenses were steadily creeping upward and creeping upward and creeping upward.

This year they are doing exactly the same thing, but government's preamble – their discussion on the Budget – is that we need to adjust our course. It seems to me we are on exactly the same course on the expense side of the ledger, the side of the ledger that we can control. I

think everybody understands that you can control how much you spend one way or the other. You can defer some things. You can cut back some things. You can eliminate some things.

Government members from time to time are fond of saying: Well, what would you do? What would you do with all of this? What are you going to cut? What are you going to eliminate?

So then we hear the government talk about the great attrition plan. The great attrition plan is going to have 1,420 or so people through attrition who will not be rehired over the next five years. This is forecast to save us a little over \$20 million a year, a significant amount over the next five years.

I go through the Budget lines and I look at the top lines on a bunch of items. What I mean by the top lines is that these are the lines at or near the minister's office. These are increases in discretionary expenses that the minister had control over and that each minister has voluntarily increased from last year.

On identifying 106 items, the amount of increase in discretionary spending by this government this year on 106 items comes to over \$30 million. So this is not to say, lay anybody off. This is not to say, cut any expenses. This is simply to say to each minister hold the line on the top line of the expenses in your department. Hold the line the same as it was last year.

Surely you must be able to do the same this year as you could last year, because the option is that we must impose an increase in the HST on people. We must increase certain fees. We must increase the hunting licences on all hunters, but in particular on – the critical one for outfitters is the 50 per cent increase retroactive to the current season which has already been sold by them.

A number of these outfitters, and quite a large number of them, have to recover or get this money somehow. They have sold their hunts to the hunters who will come from the United States. They have no way to recoup that money. So they have to eat the loss, and in some cases \$20,000 or \$30,000.

If we look line by line from the Budget, Mr. Speaker, where are some of these increases? This type of an increase, when every year you go up and you go up and you go up, this just speaks to a lack of discipline, slothfulness, a lack of commitment to financial accountability.

If you look at the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, for example, Cabinet Secretariat, Salaries this year have gone from \$638,000 last year to \$765,000. That is approximately a 20 per cent increase on that line alone.

If you go through these lines, and I will go through quite a number of them so people can get a sense of where government is wasting money, where government is not being diligent, where they are not being – clearly, they are not progressive and neither are they conservative.

The Protocol Office last year was \$137,000. So why couldn't we do it for \$137,000 this year? I do not know, but this year it is \$173,000. That is another \$37,000 that is just an increase in expense.

If you look at the Communications Branch, the Salaries alone, the increase in Salaries year over year goes from \$1,142,000 to \$1,259,000. So you can see there is another \$17,000 or \$18,000 gone to just on an increase.

If you look at the Office of Public Engagement – I am still not certain what it does – last year the Salaries and the executive support staff, Executive Support – this is not people who are front line workers, this is not people who are hands on with the public, this is Salaries on Executive Support from \$395,000 to \$429,000. That is another \$35,000.

If you continue on throughout the Budget, then you see in –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. J. BENNETT: Salaries for Tax Administration, there is no getting around it. We need to properly administer our taxes; however, this year – is it because government is increasing taxes, is it because of all the changes?

Because last year the Salaries for Tax Administration was \$2.8 million, this year it is nearly \$3.5 million. It is approximately \$600,000 more on that single line in this Budget.

Mr. Speaker, if you continue on; the Economic and Statistics Branch, last year \$2.68 million, this year \$3.1 million, another \$500,000. That is \$500,000 that somebody decided that they needed to spend more this year than they spent last year.

If you go to the Government Purchasing Agency, and this is “Appropriations provide for the operation of the Government Purchasing Agency which conducts purchasing, monitoring, and audit of procurement activities for Government departments, municipalities, academic institutions, schools and hospitals in the Province.” Last year the Salaries were \$1,506,000, this year it is \$2.247 million. That is \$700,000. That is approximately a 50 per cent increase in the cost of the Salaries in the Government Purchasing Agency.

To share some insight into how the Government Purchasing Agency seems to work or not work; when I was first elected, one of the commitments I made in my district was that there would be a district office. Because after sixty-two years of Confederation I felt the residents of the District of St. Barbe were entitled to have an office, so we had an office. It took approximately six months.

Government buildings that were available were unfit to be used. One of them, the Provincial Authority Building in Rocky Harbour is still lying vacant. So it took six months to get an office. Meanwhile, I needed a filing cabinet. So with my new constituency assistant, I said, well, we have this big, thick book on government purchasing so we should see how this works because we need a filing cabinet. We should use this as a test, a sample, and I suspect all members go through the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, the private sector –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation.

MR. J. BENNETT: – that I have worked in all of my life and in compliance with government purchasing and appropriate quotes and estimates, ordinarily I think what a person would do, I would assume, is I would pick up the telephone; I would call three suppliers in Corner Brook right alongside and get their prices. When I am in town, I would go buy one. I would put the seats down, stick it in the back, drive it to the office and I would send the bill in, here are the three quotes and here is what it is. That would probably be \$180 or \$190, a couple of hundred dollars for a four-drawer filing cabinet but because we were not supposed to do that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker is having trouble hearing the person who has been recognized to speak and, once again, I ask members for their co-operation.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

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

My assistant and I fill out the necessary forms – it is a useful exercise to go through to find out how purchasing is supposed to work. In looking at it, the supplier was Staples, so that was fine. I thought well, Staples in Corner Brook; they are right alongside. No, you cannot go there; this has to be Staples in Mount Pearl.

You have to fill out the forms, the forms go off, and we wait and see what happens. We go around the circle for quite some time and sometime in the next couple of weeks, a transport truck comes. Now, the transport truck cannot get up to my house because it is a local road. So the transport driver phones me on his cellphone and says can you come down and get the filing cabinet?

I go down in my vehicle, open up back, he and I load it in, and we take it up – it is in the box; it is in there. He has gone and I open the box and the thing is crushed. It is weeks late, double the cost, and crushed, now this thing has to be picked up and sent back. We went through the whole rigmarole and, to me, that is sort of the nature of government purchasing.

That type of purchasing simply is not sustainable because it does not make good business sense on items that cost only in the few hundreds of dollars that could easily be accessed by way of three quotes, routine common-standard items. Surely the individual, in this case a Member of the House of Assembly, should be able to say here are your three quotes: one is from Staples, one is from provincial, and one is from modern. These guys had a sale. I bought it, it is in the office, and you can come look at it. Give me the stickers to put on it, like we all put the stickers on it. It would save a couple of hundred dollars. I would have the thing on my next trip to Corner Brook – within two or three days, it would just be done.

Mr. Speaker, this is not good management of public resources in my view and then to look at this budget line and see that the Government Purchasing Agency this year on that level those salaries to go from \$1.5 million to \$2.247 million, approximately a 50 per cent increase, why is that? If you could manage last year on \$1.5 million on oil that was like \$100 a barrel or whatever, and this year we are in a bit of trouble because it is \$60-odd a barrel, surely you should be able to manage on the same amount of money as you had last year.

We expect a lot of our old age pensioners to do so. After they get their adjustment for inflation, basically, they are living on exactly the same thing as they lived on last year, yet everything goes up. Any form of Income Support and many people in struggling businesses, they do not have a way to increase their revenue automatically like government can do by jacking up expenses.

So it is the expense side of this Budget that has really got me, that in such a year that we would drive right through the \$8 billion cap, if there ever was a cap, in the last year three years came in just under \$8 billion, yet the government says that we have to alter our course. We have not altered our course. We are still going in the same direction, the same escalation, and the same trajectory. All we are doing is we are jacking up taxes. This feels to me more like tax and spend, than it does anything to do with developing a culture of whatever it was they said the culture is supposed to be this year.

MS C. BENNETT: Cost management.

MR. J. BENNETT: Oh, cost management. I am sorry. I am grateful to the Member for Virginia Waters. She is the Finance critic. She knows about cost management. She knows about unit costs and cost control.

If you go further through in the Budget and look at other numbers, if you go to page 9.9, Workforce Development and Productivity Secretariat, it all sounds good. This is for, “Appropriations provide for advancing workforce and labour market development initiatives to foster the creation of employment opportunities and the recruitment, retention and training of skilled workers.”

I would bet that is the same line put in there every single year, year after year after year without any change. It is probably exactly the same verbiage. Last year, it was \$653,000. This year it is \$824,000. How can it be another \$175,000 on a \$650,000 budget in a year when we are supposed to have restraint? How can that possibly be?

To me, the spending is out of control. There is no diligence. There is no discipline. This is in Advanced Education and Skills, if you look at Skills and Labour Market Research – now I am not sure what we are doing with Skills and Labour Market Research. It seemed like a good idea. We have the highest unemployment rate in Canada. On the Salaries, and these are on the top line costs, last year it was \$523,000 and this year it is \$625,000. Percentage wise, Mr. Speaker, that is almost a 20 per cent increase on that line. How can you need 20 per cent more in a year of restraints on \$62 a barrel oil when you can get by on the \$523,000 last year? I cannot understand it. I cannot get that at all. I do not think that the voters and taxpayers can either.

If you go further down the line – and I am always suspicious of large round numbers, numbers with lots of zeros on it because that means someone decided – it is like these are the Estimates and this is a pretty big round estimate. If you look at Professional Services in the same heading, last year we budgeted \$150,000 on Professional Services and we actually burned through \$176,000. I think somebody should have been accountable for the \$26,000.

It was \$150,000. It came in at \$176,000. What do you think it is this year? It is \$450,000 budgeted. The budget is three times as high for Professional services in that line item as it was last year. I do not see how you can possibly face the people who are going to have to pay the extra 2 per cent on HST and tell them that we have been diligent with our expenses. At the same time, we are going to jack up the taxes for a kid on a can of coke. You are going to have another 2 per cent on everything from Tim Hortons to whatever it is that people buy.

Mr. Speaker, if a person has \$1,000 to spend and you reach in and you take out \$20. It might not seem like a whole lot. You multiple that by hundreds of thousands of consumers, all of a sudden everybody gets clipped \$20 on \$1,000. That \$20 has to go somewhere. That \$20 is gone. It is gone out of the economy. It is gone out of the cash flow. It hurts the people who have to pay it. It hurts the small businesses that see that little extra drag.

Jacking up the tax like that, it is almost like – I have heard an explanation of someone with a tape worm. If you have a tape worm, the more you eat it does not make any difference. The worm eats it all. The government taxation is like a tape worm. The person can eat and eat and eat and the tape worm gets all the nourishment and you do not gain any weight. That is what is happening. I think it is absolutely abominable.

Mr. Speaker, this should be the government of the change of name. I do not fault the minister even though he is minister. This should be a fabulous department. It covers so many areas. When you talk to the front-line worker they say let me check and see what we are this week. This one is called Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

We are not doing so well in business. Tourism, I guess, is okay as long as Nova Scotia in the maps is part of Newfoundland and Labrador. I guess we took over Cape Breton. Culture, I imagine that is going to be fine. Rural development, we have no RED Boards.

Mr. Speaker, in the Minister's Office in this particular budget, first of all the salary cost \$317,500 to \$338,000; that is \$17,000 just gone,

puff. Seventeen thousand bucks is 17,000 bucks. When I see how government rounds up money, I see everybody pays small amounts of money. I see the child who buys a tin of pop, or a bar or bag of chips or whatever, and they pay the taxes penny by penny by penny and government blows it by the millions. How long does it take and how many transactions does it take to gather up that much cash so government can just burn right through it without any regard to the financial consequences for the Province and for the people?

Mr. Speaker, on the Executive Support item under General Administration, for heaven's sake, hold the line. Just hold the line once. One year, hold the line. Hold the line another year. Executive Salaries last year – and this is: "Appropriation provide for senior planning and direction of the Department including the establishment and evaluation of policies and objectives."

Mr. Speaker, after twelve years in government and this department has gone through multiple incarnations and reincarnations; surely you do not have to jack up the Executive salaries by \$95,000 from \$1.076 million to \$1.171 million. There has been so much change already. This is completely unbelievable.

Policy and Strategic Planning in the BTCRD department – what policy and strategic planning are they going to do where they have to jack salaries from \$554,000 to \$622,000?

Mr. Speaker, the cost, the expense side of the ledger of this government is completely out of control. There is absolutely no discipline whatsoever. This is not about our revenues; this is about reining in our expenses on a reasonable basis the way that normal, ordinary working families and retired people have to maintain their expenses. The way they have to check the labels and see if they are going to get a discount on this, or if they are going to get a price on their potatoes, or if they are going to get a price on their milk. People have to examine the money they have to spend and government just spends the money on and on and on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my exuberance I tried to jump ahead of the member from across the way, but I do apologize because I understood that we were up next. I do say to the member opposite, I did try to follow you but when you got to the tape worm, I lost you.

Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely delighted to stand on my feet today to represent the historic District of Harbour Main and on my feet with regard to the Budget for something like the seventeenth time. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I have been where they are right now. I think I spent four years defending amendments, telling the government that they were not doing what they were supposed to do; but for the last twelve years, I am up as a government member and I tell you, much more comfortable on this side than over there.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that of the seventeen Budgets – you compare Budgets back and forth in each given year, and each given year brings forth different challenges. I am very, very pleased to say that this Budget is as good as any that I have seen, given the particular times and the particular situation that this Province is in. In the weeks that have followed since the Budget announcement, I have done what all MHAs are doing – they are out mingling amongst their constituents. I am hearing some negatives; there is no doubt about that. I would be the first to admit it. No one wants to see their taxes increase; no one wants to see their fees increased.

There is a bottom line to all this, Mr. Speaker, and what I like – and I have to commend the Minister of Finance, our Premier, and the Cabinet, in the decisions that had to go into this Budget. It is obvious from some of the things that are coming across from the Opposition that they have difficulties in deciding what they would do. I do not hear too much about, yes – I just heard today in Question Period about a school down in Torbay.

I sit next to the member who represents that particular district, and I know the work that he has put into making sure that government understands where we should be going with that particular school. I am very pleased to hear that we have tendered for that configuration. It is the configuration that has been asked for by the grassroots, Mr. Speaker – the people who have children in those schools. Not only the intermediate school, but the high school as well. It is disconcerting to hear the member opposite, the critic for education, getting up and trying to undermine a good consensus that was gotten.

AN HON. MEMBER: That is a tough word.

MR. HEDDERSON: Yes, it is a tough word, but it is a true word. It is all right to criticize and it is all right to say to us who are here as government to go back and ask the people what they want. In this case, from what I can gather, this is what the people wanted. This is what the teachers were looking at. This is what the parents were looking at. This is what our government decided to do.

I use only that as an incident of the tough decisions. The Acting Minister of Education spoke today and talked about a tough decision, looking five years down the road and saying that, yes, there will be an issue coming up in five years' time, but we can deal with the short term in a better way than just to create empty space for five years. Mr. Speaker, that makes sense to me. It makes sense to the people who are involved in those school systems. It should make sense to anyone who is really caring about how education is.

Mr. Speaker, to get back to the Budget and to the Minister of Finance, I realize that it was an awesome task to deal with all of the decisions, an example of which that I just gave and there are many, many more. In balance – and that is what this was all about I say to the people of the Province. We had to balance out the needs with our resources. I am very, very pleased, as many of you realize, that I am associated with the Department of Education. I support the minister of this government, and that I am taking an active part in that particular department.

From the infrastructure, again we are continuing to invest. I am not going to go down through the

list of schools. That has been done time and time again in this Budget debate, so I am not going to go there. I am saying that in education, in particular, overall I believe the right decisions were made.

If you ask me did I want to see seventy-plus teaching positions go? Absolutely not, but those were positions and balanced off with that is the fact that we are having, I would say – I know the latest number is 150-plus teachers retiring this year. In actual fact, there probably will not be any particular layoffs, even though teachers might be moved around. I say it is a good decision because we are trying to find ways to get through a very difficult time without doing too much in the way of affecting the great work that has been done in education over the years, and to get us to where we are right now.

Schools have been built. Schools have been repaired. Maintenance has been carried out. Mr. Speaker, I am very, very pleased that on the infrastructure side, there was not that much in the way of delaying projects or putting off projects. They might have been stretched out a bit more but, again, Mr. Speaker, the work that has been done there is well.

With education, you are talking about not only – I am looking at the K-12, but I would stretch it into the post-secondary as well. I am very, very pleased to see us again supporting the people of this Province, students who are at university, at our post-secondary institutions, to try to make their life a little bit easier, trying to make sure that we can continue our tuition freezes, that we can keep these buildings up and that sort of thing, as they move forward. Overall, education came out very, very well in this Budget.

The other area is early childhood development, and that is a very important aspect. The Premier made a very good move that was applauded by everyone in the industry, in putting that early childhood development where it should be with regard to learning, filling in that gap in the continuum of lifelong learning, and in this case from the womb, basically, to Grade 12.

By bringing it under the auspices of the Department of Education, we were able to tap into all of the expertise we have in learning in the department as it stands. Again, I hear that

we are not doing it right. I do not know what the basis is of that, because once again, we have maintained the funding for our Early Childhood Strategy: Caring for our Future. It is a ten-year strategy, one which is focused on what the whole industry, the whole sector believes in. It is about quality, it is about sufficiency, and it is about affordability of child care.

I do not think anyone can argue – no, I have not seen an argument against either one of those things. When I attend town hall meetings, when I attend meetings with various groups on child care, one, two, three, everyone is on the same page, no doubt about it.

Since 2003, with those three things in mind, we have gone from – and these are registered child care places – we have gone up by about 70 per cent. We had about 4,600 in 2003 and we are now up to, close to 8,000. That is progress, Mr. Speaker. The thing about child care is it is very, very difficult to go, bang, and get it done. Of course, we as a government are often compared, and what really irks me is when we are compared to Quebec. Because as everyone knows, Quebec does have very excellent social services, child care services, and so on and so forth.

I was reminded today – as a matter of fact, Jocelyn Greene was mentioned in a member's statement today. I remember sitting up in Quebec, we were on a – I think it was a housing conference. I was the minister responsible there, and Jocelyn got up in Quebec and looked around, and do you know what she said? She said, it is no wonder you can afford all this affordable housing, and child care and that, because it is on the backs of us as Newfoundlanders. Of course, a hush went over the room.

I was as proud as a peacock, because you know what she was referring to. She was referring to the billions of dollars – and I see someone shaking their heads – the billions of dollars that they made off Churchill Falls over the years. That goes into the provincial coffers, as you know, billions of dollars.

I see one of the members for Labrador shaking their head in agreement. We know –

AN HON. MEMBER: You nod your head in agreement. You do not shake your head in agreement.

MR. HEDDERSON: Well, I do not mind you see shaking your heads, because obviously you are not going to be supportive of me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HEDDERSON: So, Mr. Speaker, just to get back to it, is that it is a very expensive proposition as we try to deal with the challenges that are ahead of us.

Quebec had been very, very fortunate to have a sweetheart deal with Newfoundland and Labrador, and they are reaping the benefits of it. I will go back to that, hopefully, before I finish.

To get back to the Child Care Strategy, Mr. Speaker, we have made a commitment for ten years. It is a plan – no, we are not planning to make a plan, we have a plan. We have a plan –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. HEDDERSON: As you notice, the backbench over there. They come alive now, right? They come alive. Now they are not moving their heads but their tongues are wagging. I am not going to take it from that. I only have seven minutes left. I just want to get to my points, Mr. Speaker.

We do have a plan. It is a plan that many of the organizations and some of the individuals are taking up. We do provide grants. It is a voluntary operating grant. We have \$10 million into that. I am not going to go through the details.

The Child Care Services Subsidy Program, we have \$17 million into that. Early Learning and Childhood Supplement, we have \$5.5 million into that. We are up to something like \$45.7 million. Even in an austere Budget like this, we know child care is one of our priorities, Mr. Speaker, and that is where we are going.

To get back to Churchill Falls, it is so important. I know in 2007-2008 the then Premier brought

forth an Energy Plan, but it was more than an Energy Plan, Mr. Speaker. It went to 2041 and worked backwards. The important part of all of this, one most important step was going to be Muskrat Falls, because if we were not successful at Muskrat Falls the rest of it would not fall into place.

It was a great vision; a vision of the two Premiers. She at that time, Premier Dunderdale at the time, who had taken over from Premier Williams. Both of them – she had been the resource's minister who brought forth the plan, but the two of them saw and had that vision. In years to come, we will be looking back to that point in time. Because I still believe it is possible, even though I never, ever expected the pushback on Muskrat Falls that we got and still do. Again, if we are successful with Muskrat Falls, Gull Island has to follow, and Churchill Falls in 2041. That will give us the sustainability that we absolutely need.

Right now, we are knocked back a little bit because in the interim our oil resources were supposed to allow us to continue the good work that has been done in our social programs, with our infrastructure and whatever, but we all know what happened to the oil. The oil prices are down. Our revenues are down. So we do have to, as someone mentioned, sort of put on the pause button.

We are not doing it just to see what will happen. As a result of it, we have come up with a plan. That is what this Budget is all about, is a plan to get us five years down the road and still in a good position to be able to carry through. Target 2041, as the year that it will all come together and that we will have three power plants using the same water and turning in the resources that we need in this Province to carry out the work that needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador understand that as a Budget, not the one that we wanted to put forward, but one that we believe very strongly in, that it will get us to where we need to go. There is some pain involved, no doubt about it. It does have some consequences that we are prepared to take and gamble, to some degree, but it is a calculated gamble that has been the result of much consultation, much

deliberation. Again, on any scale, this is as good a Budget as we could bring down in any particular time, especially right now.

Mr. Speaker, with a couple of minutes left I will draw attention – I always like to finish off by talking about what is most near and dear to me and that of course are the constituents who are in the constituency of Harbour Main. I am very happy to report that, we, as a district – not everyone is doing well, but overall the prosperity in my district is unprecedented.

Right now, what is the future going to bring? I am not going to be looking into a crystal ball, but I can tell you, and especially the young people – I hear about young people leaving and that sort of thing. Guess what? The backyards development in Harbour Main district is taking off; the kids are back. They are taking over from their moms and dads. They are working the iron. Some of them are travelling. Some are travelling to Alberta, but they are continuing on a very important tradition out our way, which is to make sure they can eke out a livelihood and stay in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is happening.

Mr. Speaker, our infrastructure is in good shape. I am very, very pleased that we are where we are. I am looking forward to the future. There are very few naysayers out around that I walk across. They are working out in Long Harbour. They are in Bull Arm. There is a steady stream of traffic back to the capital city.

Like I said, I am not pleased with everything. There is always something to do. There is always somebody to help, but it is a far cry than 1999 when I first was given the privilege of serving these people. We had some tremendous challenges, but they have persevered and we have persevered as a government and as a Province.

I am just asking the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to step back, look at the situation that we have today and they will make up their mind later in the fall as to which party is going to govern this particular Province; but I am convinced that a party going forward that has a five-year plan, that has, when you look back, achieved much in the twelve years that they have been in government, that they will

persevere, Mr. Speaker, and persevere because of the hard work and determination that they have to do the best for this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our new Premier has brought good things to where we are today. I am very proud to be part of his team and I look forward to continuing on and making sure that the people of my district and the Province are well represented, that we are optimistic, that we have the hope that what we have done in this Budget will get us beyond the next five years and well into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to be able to stand and respond to some of the members' comment and give some of my own personal opinion about the Budget this year. It is always a pleasure for me to stand in my place and represent the good people of St. John's North, however long that is going to last, at least sometime until – as long as the district exists I suppose, which will take us maybe up until October or maybe sometime next year, who knows, whenever the Premier gets around to calling an election, which he apparently is not in any great haste to do.

This Budget this year should have been called lost opportunity and misplaced priorities. That should have been the title on the Budget this year because that is what this Budget represents: lost opportunity and misplaced priorities. I want to get into some of the details on that as it relates to what the member just said, what some of the government members have said. Basically, this is a Budget that will do nothing other than put us back from where we are now, where we have been and where we could have been had government's priorities been different.

I sat there on Budget day and I kept thinking to myself this is the longest Budget Speech I have heard yet, the largest number of words uttered as

part of a Budget Speech yet. I think that is really demonstrative of the sort of spin that government is trying to put on this Budget. I remember watching an election campaign that was not successful one time. They were trying to nail Jell-O to a wall and it did not work. They were trying to demonstrate the way government was operating. It is like the government is trying to throw anything it can out and see what sticks because nothing seems to be sticking.

Wherever I go, I hear the same thing from people. They say, my God, when are they going to call the election? Everybody says the same thing. When are they going to call the election? We got to get rid of that crowd. That crowd got to go.

Somebody said to me the other day – somebody who is not a member of a political party, is not really a person who opens up the provincial paper every day, not a person who looks for political stories. I was in my district the other day and I ran into this person. He said: Get in the car. I sat down and had a chat with him. He said: Boy, I do not think they are going to get one seat. He said: I cannot imagine they are going to get one seat. The government he was talking about. He cannot imagine they are going to get one seat in the election.

Now, they might get one seat. It might be the Member for Terra Nova. Who knows? It could be somebody else over there. I will give them some credit; they might get one.

Government in the Budget Speech is trying to convince us that they have everything under control. Everything is under control, no need to worry at all. They have a plan to deal with it. Finally, after all this extended period of time in power, all the levers and gears of government at their behest, finally now this time it is going to be all straightened out now, do not worry about it.

The other thing that the Minister of Finance and the government is basically saying to the people of the Province is that they did not have any control over anything that went wrong. They did not have any control over any of our fiscal problems, or their spending problems, or waste and mismanagement that we have seen from this

government. They did not have any control over that at all.

No, I suppose they did not have any control over the price of oil. I do not even know how much control OPEC has over the price of oil because the power in the oil industry has become more and more diffuse over the years and OPEC itself is not a united group like it used to be back in the 1970s or the 1980s.

Fracking in the United States has changed things. Increased use of renewable energy in Europe has changed things a lot. So a lot has changed in the world. Of course, we cannot expect that you can envision the price of oil, but in some respect that is what government was doing for a long period of time.

There was a point in time where oil was up to over \$100 a barrel and government still was running deficits to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. No one out there could see that coming. They have said to us, no one could see this coming. People saw this coming, there is no question about that.

If you want to go back and read the Hansard just from the general election in 2011, you could see this coming. Go back and read the text of the Muskrat Falls debate about the price of oil and where people saw it. People said different over here. There is no question, some people saw it coming.

Average folks who balance their household budget, they saw this sort of thing coming. They could see it. They could see the poor planning. They could see the mismanagement. They could see the problems building and building and building up with this government.

Every year the Auditor General is coming out and pointing out a litany of problems. Here is where you can save money. Here is where you can stop wasting money. Here is where you can redirect funds. Here is where you can stop wasting money. Every year, year after year, there is a stack of them. Since this government took power there is a stack of them about that high. You could go in and get all kinds of ideas from there, but that is not what has happened.

Now, basically, the government is looking for a free pass from the voters. They are afraid to go out and face the voters, for one. There were fewer than 350 people who chose this Premier. The people who chose this Premier were the people who went to the PC convention. Full stop, and they had a do over on that too. They wanted everybody to just be patient, we will count it right – the same as the Treasury of the Province.

There were less than 350 people who chose this Premier. So, this Premier has little or no mandate. This government has exhausted its mandate in its three-and-a-half Premier's we have had over the past three-and-a-half-or-so years. People are fed up. Wherever you go that is what you hear from people: when will they call the election finally?

Now the Premier and other members of the government caucus are out there hinting that in addition to changing the electoral boundaries in the month of June or July or August, whenever they get around to it, now they are going to amend the Elections Act so they can change the fixed election date that they crowed about forever, that we brought in. You brought it in, and now they are going to toss it out to suit themselves. So you can go back to basically the way it was before. You did not like it before, but now that the shoe is on the other foot, now government wants to change its own fixed election date so it can have its own way.

What happens when we end up with a situation like this, when government is desperate as this, as desperate as it is to elude the voters, to not face them in a general election because ideally most people tell me we should have had one by now, and I agree. We get bad decisions made by government, and we have had a lot of them just very recently.

You only have to look at this job killing increase in the HST in sales tax. Increasing sale tax is one of the most regressive ways to raise money on the backs of average folks. It squeezes people who have the least, because they have to pay that proportionate amount of tax.

You only have to look across Canada to see what happens when a government campaigns on one thing when it comes to taxes and gets into

power and does the opposite. Look at Nova Scotia. That is what happened in Nova Scotia. They were not going to increase any taxes, then they got in and the easiest thing to do was to increase taxes on the most vulnerable, on ordinary folks, on working families through sales tax. The next opportunity the taxpayers of the province had the chance to vote, that government went out the door.

The same thing is going on in Manitoba right now. Government said we are not going to increase sales taxes, not us. What did they do? They increased sales taxes. Where are they in the polls? Very low. That is what happens when you do that to average folks, and that is what I think is going to happen with this government.

It kills the housing market, because on big ticket items like a home – and you look at it, this was the government that said they were going to give young families, people who were trying to buy their first home, they were going to give them a hand in doing that. They were going to help them, and they have not done that. We have not seen that program. They are putting this huge tax increase now on a new home. That is absolutely contrary to what they promised people in their platform in the last general election.

That is what the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador said they would do. They said they would help people buy their first new home, and now they are hindering it. They are going to depress the housing construction industry even more. So there will be fewer jobs for everyone, from carpenters, electricians, plumbers, plasters, painters. Everyone who works in that industry is going to feel the squeeze too. We already know that projections for the housing market are on a downward trajectory anyways.

The Member for Harbour Main is funny. I was reading the other day when the Member for Harbour Main was the critic for Education when he sat over on this side. He decried the cuts to teachers in press release after press release. I am sure they used up a box of paper all decrying the cuts to teachers when he was the critic. He sits over on that side now and he says: well, I do not like it very much but I have to go along with it because that is just the way it is.

He fails to recognize the disproportionately large impact that those teacher cuts have on small and rural schools. Taking a half of a unit out of a small school like St. Mark's in King's Cove really puts the squeeze on the existing workforce, the small number of the people in there who are trying to do a job. These cuts were not made with a plan.

We had the Throne Speech where government came in and said: we are going to make up a plan now. We will have a curriculum review and we will review math. We have told them time and time again, parents have told them time and time again, teachers have told them time and time again, they are having problems with the math curriculum. Finally, eventually, we do not know when, they are going to get around to doing something about that. In the meantime, we are going to cut a number of teachers. That is not the way you do it. You have it backwards. Plan first, make changes later if necessary. Do not make them at the expense of small and rural schools, educational outcomes. Do not do it like that. You have it backwards.

Then he talked about the school in Torbay, which I have raised here several times. Not because I am trying to undermine that project. I am trying to do my job as an Opposition member here to protect taxpayers and also to make sure they get what they deserve, which is a school that is big enough to fit the kids that the board says they are sending there. That is all it is we are trying to do.

I think the Member for Harbour Main should go back and look at some of the evidence – I have a lot of it here – with this, because in September 2014 the board decided that projections five years out would show that they will send Grade 8s to that school, that they would have a pressure.

Now, that is not five years after the school is constructed – the tender has not been awarded yet. The school has to be built yet, and they say it is going to be September 2016 – we will see. So that is not five years after, that is actually three years after. I do not know about anybody else here, but if you look at new school builds in Carbonear, for example, you look at all the pressures in Paradise, in Mount Pearl, and Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, and all the pressures

we have had in Torbay already, who has got confidence in those projections? Not me. I do not have one iota of confidence in those projections. They have let us down too many times. So we cannot count on that.

This is about political expediency, I say to the Member for Harbour Main. This is about political expediency. This is about getting this project out the door as fast as we can, award the tender, and we tell parents in Torbay they are going to get a new school for 2016, we tell parents in Paradise they are going to get a new school for 2016, and we tell parents in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips they are going to get a new school in 2016. We tell parents in CBS they are going to get a new one, and we tell parents in Gander they are going to get a new one. We are going to build all these new schools – not before the next election; they did not plan for any of that. They will build them all later, and who knows if their projections are off at all, then we have problems.

So, all we are trying to do here is make sure that parents and kids in those communities get what they are entitled to, which is the same level of education as anybody else in this Province. That is the goal here. We should all be united on that. We should all be together with that same goal that every kid, whether you live on the coast of Labrador, whether you live on the coast of Newfoundland, the Island, whether you live in the interior, whether you live on the South Coast, whether you live on the North Coast, the West Coast, the Avalon Peninsula, that everyone is entitled to the same level of education, the same programs and services, regardless of where you live. We all have to believe that.

Now, the other thing, I just could not figure it out. The Member for Harbour Main talked about how everybody is hunky dory – he did not use those words, but that is what was suggested to me. Everybody is hunky dory with their 10-Year Child Care Strategy. Everybody is on board. He was at a meeting that a bunch of the rest of us were, recently, held by a Coalition for Better Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador. I did not hear any of what he said. I did not hear any of that, that they are all on board and they think it is all great. Not at all – and I have a list of things here.

Where is the update on the 10-Year Child Care Strategy? Where is the update on that? Everybody is wondering, where is the update on that? Those people there, they want an update on that. They want to know. Where is the centralized child care registry? It was going to be online and all these promises that we had, that was part of last year's second year of the ten-year plan, so it is all going sideways really slowly. It is like you are going down an unploughed road in the winter and she is starting to go a bit sideways because the road has not been ploughed; you do not have enough salt or sand down and it is going aside. That is what it feels like to me.

No registry – we do not know. I asked the Minister of Education about that in December. Oh, that will be done before the end of the year. Never heard hide nor hair of it since. It is just as well not to ask.

The voluntary Operating Grant Program – the government used outdated statistics. They did not bother to consult with people any time recently about it. They did not comprehensibly look at what it costs to operate a child care centre on the Northeast Avalon. They did not look at the sort of discrepancies that exist all across the Island and in Labrador, the differences in economies of scale and all of that. They did not look at any of that at all. They managed to get one group to come – a group that does very good work with early childhood educators in this Province, managed to get that group to come to their press conference. That is the only people who were advised of it.

They made the announcement on the voluntary Operating Grant Program. They hung it on that lobby group, that association for early childhood education. They more or less blamed them initially – oh, we consulted with them, when everybody was up in arms about the lack of consultation. They blamed them and then eventually the minister went on Open Line and said well, this will probably work better for rural Newfoundland.

They should have called it the rural voluntary operating grant subsidy if that was the case because it is not going to work for the rest of us here in the urban part in St. John's and

surrounding communities. That has gone sideways. That is not working.

There was a plan for a subsidy program review and that was supposed to happen in 2015. That is like CETA. That was all supposed to be finalized in 2015 or like the procurement strategy, or the new legislation, that was all supposed to be done. Here is another thing that has been punted down the road, like the Torbay school, for somebody else to figure out. Wait until after the election, let somebody else figure that mess out, who cares how much extra it costs, who cares how much hardship it costs, who cares how foolish it is to not have any plan whatsoever, let's just go ahead and do it anyway. Because it is politically expedient to do it that way: cover yourself – that is what they are trying to do.

The Inclusion Supports Program – a program that is intended to help vulnerable kids, kids with special education needs, kids with disabilities, to help them get a space in child care – that was supposed to be reviewed and then we were supposed to get a better program as part of the child care strategy. We are in the third year. When was that supposed to happen? In year two. Did it happen? No.

You ask the Minister of Education about it – oh, don't worry about that; that is coming. It is almost June and we still do not have it. All these things that I am listing off here about the 10-Year Child Care Strategy, you are falling behind – you are falling behind. Do you know what is going to happen? We are going to have the election and you say oh, do not worry about, you will get a new PC platform – all you have to do is, more or less, get a new cover and put it on the old one because that is the way it is going to be. All these things that you have promised to do, they will not be fulfilled. You get a new cover to put on the platform – oh, vote for us.

People are not going to put up with it, Mr. Speaker. No one believes them anymore; no one believes these people anymore.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege to stand in my place representing the people of the great and cultural District of Port au Port on the very West Coast of this Province. It is a great privilege to speak on *Budget 2015: Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is taking a fair, balanced, and measured approach that requires a plan for today, not tomorrow, to protect the huge progress we have made over the past decade. What Budget 2015 does it allocates \$8.1 billion in expenditures. Some examples of these expenditures include approximately \$3 billion in health and community services; \$1.4 billion in the K-12 and post-secondary education; and, we will invest more than \$600 million in infrastructure projects that will create jobs and that will stimulate the economy.

Mr. Speaker, what I am going to do this afternoon is talk a little bit about the various departments within government and what this Budget means to the different programs and services those departments offer. First, let me look at the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. With investment totalling more than \$200 million, Budget 2015 is focused on nurturing a diverse and globally competitive business community, as well as supporting critical community infrastructure to encourage economic growth. We all know that investment in tourism will stimulate the economy and create business and economic growth.

These investments represent government's long-standing commitment to identifying and capitalizing on growth opportunities by diversifying the economy, creating wealth, and contributing to sustainable employment, as I said earlier. Through these investments, Mr. Speaker, our government continues to strengthen traditional industries, we continue to diversify the economy, and encourage emerging sectors.

In challenging fiscal times, Mr. Speaker, investing in a strong and diverse business

community is even more critical to maintain the Province's economic health. That is why we pride ourselves in making those investments in tourism-related projects right across this Province.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, our government is dedicated to creating a culture of organizational accountability, excellence, and consistency across all Child, Youth and Family Services programs and regions. Our government is focused on case management and service delivery for children and youth in our Province.

We recognize, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of challenges in our Aboriginal communities, primarily related to social issues and other factors such as the remoteness of our communities. To assist the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services with improving and expanding delivery programs and services in the Innu zone, an investment of \$278,000 in Budget 2015-2016 will allow for the continuation of the mentoring team approach in Sheshatshiu.

Mr. Speaker, with a support of \$475,000, this will allow for the creation of six new front-line positions in Labrador in 2015-2016. On a provincial level, the addition of new positions will allow the provincial government to meet the organizational commitment of a 1 to 20 ratio for workers to caseload for the first time since the multi-year plan was announced in Budget 2012.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, continues to revitalize the child protection system in the Province through supporting out-of-home care options for children and youth. The Foster a Future campaign will be maintained into 2015-2016 through an investment of \$150,000.

The Community of Natuashish Service Enhancement Program will continue in 2015-2016 as well, Mr. Speaker. The program consists of additional social work teams to fly in on a two-week rotational basis to support the permanent staff who live and work in the community.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the Department of Environment and Conservation. We look at, specifically, the Moose Management Plan. We

recognize and acknowledge the many significant challenges in the management of such an important resource as our moose.

Moose vehicle collisions on our highways, access to the annual moose harvest, and agricultural-base conflicts with moose are a few of the issues our government considered with developing its Five-Year Moose Management Plan, supported by a \$1.8 million investment over the next five years through Budget 2015. The plan is a coordinated, regional, scientifically based, and balanced approach to managing the moose population while mitigating moose vehicle collisions.

One new mitigation technique is the creation of two new moose reduction zones, which will provide a greater opportunity for the removal of near-road moose through hunting. This approach has been designed to measure the effectiveness of the removal of moose near the roadside as a means to reducing moose vehicle collisions and moose entering our highways.

Budget 2015 supports the Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve, which is home to fossils of the oldest complex life forms found anywhere on earth. I believe, Mr. Speaker, this reserve is found in the beautiful and historic District of Ferryland.

Earlier this year, the provincial government submitted the nomination dossier to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. A site evaluation will be conducted in the summer or fall of 2015 and a decision by the World Heritage Committee is anticipated to be announced sometime in July 2016.

Through Budget 2015, two additional seasonal interpreters will be on-site at Mistaken Point to help make the experience of exploring and learning about these incredible life forms even more meaningful for our visitors and our residents alike.

Budget 2015, an investment for the development of a dam safety program will support increased regulatory oversight for dams in the Province, decrease the risk of dam failures and the impact on those affected, and improve public safety around dams.

Let me look just a little bit at Fisheries and Aquaculture and what we are doing in Fisheries and Aquaculture in Budget 2015. Budget 2015 allocates more than \$10 million to support the Province's seafood sector, building on the more than \$100 million that the provincial government has invested in programs and infrastructure to advance the sector since we took government in 2003.

Budget 2015 includes \$2.6 million to continue support for world-class fishery science at the centre. Newfoundland and Labrador is the only Province in the country, Mr. Speaker, to solely fund its own fisheries research initiatives with more than \$15 million invested in Marine Institute Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems research since 2010.

Budget 2015 also allocates \$1 million to the Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program, bringing total investments under this program to approximately \$14 million since 2007. To date, more than 280 projects have been funded under this program to enhance harvesting, processing, and marketing techniques in the seafood sector.

Since 2006, our government has invested \$27 million through the Aquaculture Capital Equity Investment Program to support industry expansion. As part of Budget 2015, \$2.8 million is allocated for this program to expand this vibrant industry by attracting private sector investment.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, am proud of the fact that we do have an aquaculture facility in the beautiful Town of Stephenville where they are hatching smolt in Stephenville.

To further the success and expansion of the aquaculture sector, Budget 2015 allocates more than \$1 million over two years for oceanographic research to support aquaculture expansion, as well as nearly \$1 million to complete a bio-secure wharf in Milltown. Mr. Speaker, we are making investments in fisheries and aquaculture, contrary to what the Opposition may think and may say.

Health and Community Services; Budget 2015 continues our government's focus on creating a health care system that supports better health

care outcomes, provides better health care, and produces better value for our money.

Mr. Speaker, with innovative and strategic investments in health care infrastructure, care for seniors, and supports for mental health and addictions, Budget 2015 investments will help ensure improved and sustainable health care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Newfoundland and Labrador is among the highest per capita cost for health care delivery in Canada. Without a change in approach, health care will continue to consume an increasingly greater proportion of the provincial Budget. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, will continue to seek new and innovative high-quality approaches to delivering health and community services to the people of the Province. In a Province of more than 500,000 people, there are fifteen hospitals, twenty-three community health centres, 119 community clinics, and twenty-three long-term care facilities.

Since 2004, our government has invested approximately \$1.5 billion in health care infrastructure, including new facilities, repairs and renovations to existing facilities, and for new equipment. I, too, in my District of Port au Port, in the beautiful Town of Lourdes and the beautiful Town of Cape St. George, we have a renovated clinic in Lourdes that is class A and in the Town of Cape St. George, we are now leasing on a ten-year lease a brand new facility to house our medical doctor and practical nurse.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the departments I want to touch on today, and as debate goes on, as we sit in the House until the summer, I will have more opportunities to speak on the Budget and to speak more about my district.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to speak on *Budget 2015: Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the sub-amendment put forward in the current Budget. Just following the colleague here, I want to point out that the PC government really is trying to sell itself as something that it clearly has proven that it is not for the past twelve years.

This provincial Budget talks about balance – and that is pretty meaningless; it really is, given that there is \$2 billion in borrowing in this Budget, there are fee hikes, there are tax hikes, there are consumption tax hikes. It appears that the current government after posting deficit after deficit still cannot curb spending or apply their own PC Blue Book promises to maintain a debt ceiling.

The Member for St. Barbe raised this earlier about how this year's Budget has further increased spending than last year's Budget, despite the plummeting drop of oil happening well before pre-Budget consultations, well before the Budget planning process. There is more spending in this Budget than last year's Budget.

The former Minister of Finance and the former Premier of this Province used to talk constantly – and a number of members on that side talk about net debt and applaud net debt. Well, the people of the Province do not really care as much about net debt as they care about direct debt. I would care much more about direct debt and what I owe. If you are managing the balance books of the Province and the people's purse strings, then you have to look at direct debt.

The direct debt has taken a complete 360. In 2003, the \$12 billion in direct debt had dropped. The current government can talk about how they have managed the purse strings – and if we look at direct debt, total public sector debt dropped to \$7.3 billion down to \$6.8 billion, and then down to \$6.7 billion in 2013. It was down quite low.

Where are we today? Well, in 2014, that went up to \$11.5 billion. That is over a \$5 billion increase in one year in the total public sector debt. Now in 2015, total public sector debt, as I read from the appendix in the Budget document,

is \$12.2 billion – \$12.2 billion. So you talk about fiscal prudence, it is not here with this current government. They have taken a complete 360.

They have taken the debt that every man, woman, and child of this Province owe from a low of \$12,763 all the way up in this Budget projecting that the total public sector debt per capita, per person, every man, woman, and child to be \$23,283.77. You talk that is fiscal responsibility? It is incredible.

We owe more now than we did in 2003 and we are way past the peak oil in the developments that we currently have. So this is just plain bad management. Clearly, the Conservatives here are just like their spend-and-borrow cousins in Ottawa, just like the Harper Conservatives.

I will put this in context because it was the Liberals that gave Canada eleven consecutive Budget surpluses, a record unmatched by any major economy in the world. This was eleven record surpluses and it was the Liberal government that gave that while the Harper Conservatives brought seven years of deficits during times when oil soared. It sounds much like the current Tory government here in this Province after having \$18 billion of oil revenues.

Having all of this precedented wealth, hearing a former Premier, Premier Marshall, saying we are flush with cash, this is the golden age; yet in a golden age we have a Budget where you have to borrow \$2 billion this year and projected over the next five years, you are going to have to borrow close to \$5 billion. This is the type of approach that the federal Harper Conservatives have taken to, coming to management of the economy, the exact same way as the current government is with their Budget: bad management.

With an election expected in October the Tory government, these people across the way here, want to convince Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that they have been exemplary stewards of the Province's economy, the best managers. Well, this is manifestly not true. It is not true. They are not the best stewards of the economy and we can highlight today in Question Period where there were a number of examples

where this government, these ministers, this Cabinet, have made very bad decisions when it comes to the provincial economy, actually adding hundreds of millions of dollars in errors, in debt, when it talks about the expropriation of Abitibi Bowater and all of those assets that are there related to it.

Well, whatever the assets are, the liabilities are far greater. When you talk about what the federal government had to pay to NAFTA, \$130-something million, what the Province had to pay to get back the hydro and timber assets, and that sits stagnant; when you talk about the liabilities associated environmentally when it comes to that matter and when you talk about court litigation and everything that went forward, that was a blunder, a real blunder by this government and the former Premier of the day, and really mismanaged.

When you look at deals that this government have made when it comes to saying that they are fiscally responsible and for business, well, they are not living up to their commitment. We see basic deals that have been put forward that do not even have a paper trail – no paper trail; \$19 million in bonds given back in Humber Valley Paving. Is that good business, good financial responsibility and being good stewards? No, it is absolutely not. We see that if the minister of the day did not resign, the Premier was going to fire him for that bad decision-making process.

When we look at deals made in our fishery, saying that there is going to be forty weeks of work over five years maintained and 110 jobs, we hear today that is not happening. The people of Fortune are not getting that work. They are not getting the work that was contracted for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Government is not living up to it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: I hope the Minister of Fisheries will get up and stand on his feet –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – and clarify what they are going to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: You will have the opportunity to speak to the bad deal that you made and you have to account for that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – and stand up for the people of the Province. You are ignoring the fishery –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – and the development that needs to happen. It is another bad deal for the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: The Confederation Building cost overruns; this started as a \$20 million deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: We find out today that it is \$56 million. That does not even account for the higher level floors. When we talk about building schools that are too small, the Minister of Education could not really respond to that and account for what the school board had said that this was supposed to be a five to eight school.

They are building schools again too small. It is going to cost the taxpayers more money and they had time to get the tendering process right. Yet they are still heating vacant schools – waste, government waste.

This is Tory economics. It has consisted of bloated spending and diminished revenue sources, a perfect storm of fiscal imprudence. The Tory's economic policy does not extend much beyond trying to sell a finite resource: fossil fuels.

They truly lack the economic diversification in Newfoundland and Labrador, as I said to the Minister of Forestry, who is also the Minister of Fisheries today. Your documents state: 2009, 5,500 jobs and \$250 million. The forest strategy came out and said 5,500 jobs and \$250 million. This year in the Budget debate the members opposite said 5,500 jobs and \$250 million, yet we have had sawmills close up shop and we have had mills close since that time.

Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, which is the largest employer in the forest sector, has 550 jobs. I am not making this number up. This is what is listed in The Economy, your own Budget document. Where are the other 5,000 jobs when in the same report that talks about the farming and agriculture, and the logging and forest activity, it says that the GDP for 2013 was only \$177 million and 2,200 person years for 2014 and employment.

The minister has some real explaining to do when it comes to the jobs and accounting for the jobs in forestry. They truly lack diversification. They had a forestry diversification plan that really did not go anywhere when it comes to creating further economic wealth in a renewable resource, because Tory economics focuses on the fossil fuels and not on diversification.

The Harper Conservative fiscal record is the flip side of the Chrétien and Martin Liberals. The Harper government run an astonishing seven consecutive Budget deficits and it is likely to run its eight straight deficits this year, given the projection of oil. Now the federal government projects oil to be \$81 US, the world price, so they are likely going to go into deficit, not surplus this year.

Liberals have been proven financial managers of the economy and it has been proven federally when it comes to what the federal Liberals have been able to do, and I will say that the current government has projected in this year's Budget oil to be much lower than their Conservative

cousins at \$62 a barrel. This is a far drop from when they recommended oil at \$124 barrel when nobody else in the industry would have ever – they laughed at this government for actually doing it. I talked to industry experts in the field saying that they would have never projected oil to be at \$124 a barrel.

The current government may look to the past, but their own record is just like that of the Harper government, just like the Conservatives in Ottawa. They are on track for the same number of deficits and four more years of deficits. When oil was a \$100 a barrel and more, there was monumental borrowing and now there is going to be even more: \$5 billion almost more in borrowing over the next five years.

If we look at that during the Harper era, Canada's national debt soared by 32 per cent to a record of \$615.8 billion. Well, in the Liberal years of Martin and Chrétien the national debt modestly shrank – shrank by 4 per cent. During that same era, the provincial Conservatives initially paid down debt – and they took and touted and was very proud to say we paid down the debt here in this Province, put \$2 billion down on the debt, but they did not control their expenditures, did not plan for the long term or a rainy day. Direct debt, the public sector debt, is now up over \$12 billion, way more than what it was when they paid down this debt. They have expanded it exponentially; \$5 billion-plus in just the last two years.

The electorate really know when you talk about a legacy fund, that it is really out to lunch on their leadership and on behalf of the Premier. They could not balance the books at \$100 when oil was at peak and now well past peak, the only solution is tax, borrow, and increase spending. This is not really a well-planned economy.

The Conservatives have been free spenders and so have the provincial Conservatives. They are taking a wait and see – taking a we-will-fix-it-later approach. We have seen so much waste in the government when it comes to spending and program spending and expenditures to be unsustainable, and unsustainable for some time. This is signalled over and over and over by the Auditor General of this Province.

Did those powers to be listen? No, in many cases, they opted not to take the advice, sat on decisions that could have saved taxpayers money, like reining the overinflated salaries at the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information. These individuals compare their \$50 billion budget and the few dozen employees to the salaries and compensation of the leadership at Eastern Health and Memorial University, which have thousands of employees, thousands of students or patients, and hundreds of millions of dollars in budgetary items and actions in terms of accountability.

Action now, based on the Minister of Health and Community Services, does not go far enough. It really shows the poor management style of the current Conservatives. They are not fit to manage the Province's finance. They are really not fit to manage.

If we go and look at Harper's big spending and tax cutting ways it really weakens the central government without noticeably benefiting the Canadian economy. When we look at growth in both GDP and jobs, it has been falling over the past five years. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the key economic indicators, GDP and jobs, are also falling and projected to fall. It is very serious matters, Mr. Speaker.

It seems this government appears not willing to do the heavy lifting and address the needs of the current economy. Instead, they opt to increase the HST, consumption tax, proven to hurt an economy, to stunt growth, to stunt jobs and economic development and creation.

I know it is something that every member on that side of the current Progressive Conservative government, they support and they are happy. They voted for a private member's motion against it, to prevent the tax increase. So they wholeheartedly support increasing the HST. All the Tory members, all the PC members, support putting up the HST to 15 per cent here in the Province, which is basically taxing virtually every good and service sold in the Province, further hampering economic growth.

Over-indebted consumers now have to curtail their spending. With 265 increases in fees in Budget 2015, increased consumption taxes, job losses, and indicators that would show more

consumers will have to curb their retail spending – and the indicators show a decline year over year over year until it gets to going back to surplus, somewhere spending is going to increase \$500 million and \$400 million, miraculously. I do not know where that is going to come from. Maybe they will explain that when they get up to speak on their projections. We know that is going to have an impact. The fixed cost is going up. When you talk about all the extra costs associated with HST, if consumers have less money, inflation is going up, CPI, then they are going to have to focus more on their fixed costs, their basic goods, and have less for disposable income on discretionary items.

There must be incentives for business to invest cash to become more globally competitive. That is a real opportunity. When Japan increased their consumption tax, they saw their economy drop significantly. We have already talked about that here in this House. One of the benefits that can help Japan get out of the slump in their economic woes – because China eclipsed them of being the second-largest economy – is that they focused. They focused on business attraction, investment, export, and doing business internationally.

This government, the Minister of Business and the Premier have been completely irresponsible and irrational when it comes to looking at doing business globally here in the Province and when it looks at export and all the opportunities we have.

The Minister of Health and Community Services, who is responsible for government purchasing, said this government has pulled out of the agreement on internal trade, and all other current trade agreements that are being negotiated. It is short-sighted, and it is a problem that this PC government has created. They have created this on their own. It is a storm that is a problem when it comes to saying, we want business, come do business, we are a competitive environment here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Well, increasing consumption fees for anybody wanting to do business here sends the wrong message, and also the impact on how you work with other international countries and develop

relationships and partnerships. We only have to look at our image and how tarnished it is under this government when it comes to the expropriation of Abitibi Bowater. Does that send a message that we will expropriate your assets? You cannot do business here. Also, the stance on CETA and international trade, it is very problematic.

On the taxation side of things, as well, when it comes to national debt. What we really need to do is we need to afford improvements to quality of life and change government's priorities. What business really needs is they need a low-cost competitive labour force, and business-friendly tax policy has not presented.

When government talks about in their Budget, we have saved consumers and business \$625 million this year, it has not saved or prevented the loss of Terra Nova Shoes/Kodiak from leaving this Province, High Liner, a number of call centres and other businesses that government propped up that went to other jurisdictions because there was a more competitive environment and lower labour costs.

What we really need to see is, we need to see where we have a more competitive environment. These are not radical priorities that I am talking about. They account for the fact that any simple economics or government 101 will teach that countries that invest in themselves thrive. We are not seeing that in Budget 2015.

We see a real failure, a real mismanagement, and we see a real page out of the Harper playbook. It is a real trend over the years, and I think I have clearly highlighted that from the fiscal prudence and responsible decisions that were made by federal Liberals versus what is being done here in this House. We will be good managers of the economy.

I thank you for the opportunity to make my point. I will have more to say when I stand here in the House of Assembly to speak to the Budget.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I do time and time again when I get on my feet in this hon. House I want to say a big thank you to the great people of the District of Lake Melville, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to be here time and time again and speak to Budget after Budget on their behalf, to push their issues and to serve them as best I can.

It has been a lifelong dream to be here. I absolutely love this job, and I am sure everybody in this House does as well. Not only do you get to hear about the good things that are done, but you get to hear about some of the pressures, the trials and tribulations in people's lives as well, Mr. Speaker. Then you become a part of the solution hopefully, and will be able to serve them every day in this wonderful job that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk just a little bit about a young woman from my district, Ms Amy Curlew. Last Thursday, I had the distinct privilege of taking a picture and accepting an award for female hockey for this young hockey player. Amy is currently the only Newfoundlander and Labradorian at the women's under-eighteen strength and conditioning camp for our national team.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: She needs to be commended. I am not going to take all the credit, absolutely, but I did coach this young lady, Mr. Speaker. I will say as her coach, I saw the heart, I saw the drive, I saw the tenacity. She was the first one trying to get into doing the drill, demonstrating the drills with the coaches, the first one on the ice, and the last one off the ice.

Then as her game developed, you started seeing the hockey IQ, those hockey smarts, her drive and desire to make the players around her better.

I just want to say big congratulations to her. She spent the last three years away from home, in Ontario, with the Oakville Hornets and Appleby hockey school there, with the hockey team for that school.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say congratulations also, not only to Amy but to Tony and Zena as well, her mom and dad, because if you talk about dedication, it takes an entire family to get a young lady there. When she should be having a childhood, what she is doing is she is out there counting her calories, making sure she is living a clean, healthy lifestyle, getting up and doing the work outside of the ice, in the gym and the dryland training. She does it all.

With that, I just want to say congratulations. We are so very, very proud of you Amy. All the best as you continue chasing your dreams towards your hockey career.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to try not to get pulled into the depression that the opposite member over there from The Straits – White Bay North is trying to do. I am going to say to the people at home, do not buy into it. Let's have some pride in what we are doing as a Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: I tell you what, I am going to use my own district as the example here. I talk about when I went away to school. I have said it many times in this House. I went away in 1992. I went away to school.

Mr. Speaker, what did we have there? I tell you what, in Lake Melville we did not have a lot. We had a gravel road. We had some old rundown infrastructure. This, of course, was under the previous Administration from across the way. Kids like me, we could not wait to get out of there, to go away, to see something else, to see what else is out there, and to look for opportunities in life to further our education.

What do you see right now? What do you see in Lake Melville when you do through the streets? You see a new high school; PC government. You see waste water treatment; PC government. You see an auditorium for the arts; PC government.

Look at our Trans-Labrador Highway; I can drive now, with the exception of that ten kilometers – yes, that is famous. We are going to do that now as we start this season. I can drive to Labrador West, and I tell you what, in very short order. Not only that, if I want to go past Labrador West, I will be able to go into Quebec and I am going to see a Labrador flag flying at the border. These are all initiatives under a PC government, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you very much. Yes, well-deserved applause.

I am not even going to talk about fire trucks and playgrounds. I am not going to talk about money given out to organizations, social and otherwise, Mr. Speaker, and we are still working.

I have seen a lot of money outlaid in my three, going on four, brief years in this House of Assembly. I will tell you what we have done. We have governed with principle, Mr. Speaker, and integrity. I am very proud to be a part of this PC team; very proud to be a part of the Cabinet of this Premier, Premier Davis.

We have seen governance by principle. We have seen outlays of cash, not only in the PC districts, but all up and down. I am going to talk about a few of those in Labrador, but first I have to bring it back home to the district because they have me a little riled up over there because what you are seeing is you are seeing that hyperbole, that rhetoric, that spin, you are seeing all that and people are getting negative about that. The media are pushing that sometimes, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes people at home – do you know what? They do not know what to believe, so sometimes we can get a little riled up over here, but that is okay.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the good work we do, and I am going to commend two ministers who happen to sit in front of me here: the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and the Minister of Fire and Emergency Services. We had a situation – yes, we did – on the North Coast of Labrador, not in my district at all, with the community of Hopedale. All of a sudden there is no water due to unforeseen

circumstances. What you have is you have some heavy-duty ice work up there, frigid temperatures, very rough winters. In Labrador we are famous for that, but I am going to tell you what we did, with the AngajukKâk from Hopedale, Mr. Jimmy Tuttau, what we did is we all came together.

In today's day and age what we had is we had a minister in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, two out here on the Island, we had the AngajukKâk, Mr. Tuttau, and members of his Inuit Community government in Happy Valley-Goose Bay all talking over the Internet about what we are going to do, what is needed, all the relevant staff there, the co-ordination of the bottled water sent in there to make sure that everybody in the community had fresh, clean drinking water. It was all done with perfection.

Where are we? A couple of short weeks later, we have water to every household. The situation is getting better and through Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, we have, I believe it is now, \$691,000 going in there to remedy these issues right here and our portion on the 90-10, what a split, that was \$594,000 to the community of Hopedale. I will just say thanks for your professionalism Hopedale and to Jimmy Tuttau and his council, and thanks to these departments, thanks everybody for being involved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Good work like that happens every single day, pushed from this side of the House. I just want to say we are going to be up there now shortly as soon as we get out of this House. I am going up to Hopedale. We are going to talk about some long-term planning, Mr. Speaker, and how we can work closely together and make sure that Hopedale gets what they need for the long term.

With that – and while I am on the topic of water, I will give one more minute too, I just want to say you talk about Charlottetown and Labrador and Cartwright. They just got these two of five advanced drinking water units, so \$750,000-plus there. Basically what this is, is units there, it taps into the municipal supply. We are big part of that, Mr. Speaker, part of \$1.9 million we

threw at that. Just while we are on the topic of water, I just had to bring that up.

Really quickly, Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk if I may just a little bit about the community of Lake Melville again. I myself am little bit known as a musician from time to time back home. The last four weekends – I just have to talk about this – in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, we put together a fundraiser for a family in need, for Tony and Dot Allen, wonderful people. God bless Tony and God rest his soul. Tony, if there ever was a Labradorian true to the core, he was there. If you did not know Tony between Goose Bay and Rigolet, you simply were not out on the land, I will say that.

The community came together. I ended up playing with the Montagues from (inaudible) that night, Mr. Speaker. The community comes out and I just want to thank them for that. When people are in need not only do we always get up here and we talk about helping people in need at a government level, but right deep down to our core Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are always there to support one individual, one family at a time, whatever it takes.

After that, Mr. Speaker, we put together a fundraiser and we got Miriam and Clayton Saunders of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the parents of Loretta who was so tragically murdered in Halifax – we came together. We got her out to the proceedings in court and they had a favourable outcome. I just want to say that is what the community does.

Then the next weekend again, Mr. Speaker, in Lake Melville we had a wonderful turnout for Marian and Sonny Edmunds. We raised at that one over \$24,000, one week's planning, and the people came out to support a family in need again.

I am not going to dwell on that. This weekend for Valerie Pardy-Rachwal we just had another one, Mr. Speaker, and it was a wonderful turnout. Some of these I was involved in organizing, some not, but that is not the point. The last one actually I was a part of the organizing team. I actually got to go out and have a few dances with the wife and enjoy the band and all that.

Having said that, the business community showed up, it transcends partisan politics, Mr. Speaker. We have all kinds of people, even NDP people in the room, believe it or not. What you have is people helping people. I just want to commend everybody who was involved in that. That is something special to witness.

Despite the depression you get from the Opposition on the other side of the House, there is still hope, there are still good people, there are still hard-working professionals in this Province who are going to do a good job. There are still people on this side of the House who are going to govern with principle. We are going to do what is right no matter what spin you want to put on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I am just going to move on past that. I just want to talk a little bit about a conversation that I had with a cab driver in this beautiful City of St. John's.

Mr. Speaker, he got in – and I have seen this guy before. I will say to everybody out there too, if you are going to an event, if you are going to a function, whether it is charity or otherwise, do not drink and drive. Spend your \$10, \$20, \$30 and hop into a cab. You run into some great people, some colourful characters when you do as well.

I am just going to say, he said: What is going on with this government, buddy? He said: You have the HST raised up and all these job cuts, eliminating thousands of jobs and all this. He said: I heard on the radio that you have all these job cuts going and \$18 billion, \$20 billion, \$25 billion, \$30 billion in oil revenue all squandered, thrown down the toilet. Do you know what we did? We had just a regular conversation.

I said: Well, when it comes to our attrition plan, the first 1,400 jobs you are talking about, ten people go and eight get rehired. So those young people coming into the workforce, they have a chance. They have a chance to get into a wonderful job. So you might spin it over there and you might see it on the radio, oh my God, 1,400, 1,500 job cuts like that; no, it is an attrition plan to deal with the financial

circumstances that we have in this government of day, I say, in comment to that.

Then we talked about some restructuring in health and community services. There is nothing wrong – we are continuously looking for efficiencies, Mr. Speaker. That is what you have to do when you have the responsibility of governing: continually look for those efficiencies and make changes where you need it. If you have to address redundancies, go ahead and do it. If you have to sharpen your pencil from time to time, go ahead and do that too, Mr. Speaker; but the bottom line here is this, it is the way it gets put out to the people and people latch on to the negativity of it that is brooding over here. I do not have time for that; there are too many good things happening, too many good things in my district, and too many good things across this Province.

What I will say is by the time we talked about the HST increase, one that we dealt with when times were better, now we have put it back when we have to be more frugal, you talk about that, you talk about the job loss and then you talk about the oil revenues which we heavily, heavily I say to everybody who is conscious in this Province you have seen the infrastructure, you have seen everything we have done in the last decade under this PC government, Mr. Speaker.

I have seen it in my district and I know you have seen it in all of yours as well. You talk about tax relief, putting money in the pockets of people. You talk about schools, you talk about hospitals, you talk about pavement, you talk about research and development, loans to companies to get more jobs, and you talk about investments in the fishery, Mr. Speaker. To be able to stand up, speaker after speaker after speaker and say that we have squandered. If you are in a position like we were with our oil revenues to do what is right by the people of the Province, invest the money where it needs to be, and fix what we were left with from the previous Administration you are duty bound to do it, Mr. Speaker, and I will say we did a good job of it.

With that, I am not going to dwell on the negativity; I am going to talk a little bit about Labrador for the final few minutes that I have. I am going to say, Mr. Speaker, I am just going to

zip through these because you never get enough time to speak in this House of Assembly.

I tell you what, when you first walk into this House as a new member, you are wondering, oh my God, how am I going to fill twenty minutes? You punch a little time at it and then you are looking for twenty minutes, thirty minutes, forty, you can never fill it. You can never do it, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I am going to go on and I am just going to be brief and list some things here. We have \$55 million this year's Budget going back towards the finishing of the Trans-Labrador Highway. When I say finishing off, it is between Lab West and Happy Valley-Goose Bay is going to be done. That is about \$5 million. Where is the other \$50 million going? We are going to head down to Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, I say to the hon. member across. We are going to head down, out of a Tory district, into a Liberal district and put the money where it needs to go because that is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. It is as simple as that, absolutely.

Thirty-one million –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. RUSSELL: We know we had to take another look at the way we are going to do the ferry transportation up in Labrador because it has to be done right. When the bids come, everything comes in, Mr. Speaker, and it is just too expensive, and we have some fiscal realities we have to face, we have to do what is right. We had to pull that back. I commend the Minister of Transportation – pull that back, work with the Nunatsiavut Government and Nunatsiavut Marine Inc., and see how we could continue on the existing relationship. Do what is right by the people of the Province.

When we go on, Mr. Speaker –

MS DEMPSTER: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order, the hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: I would like to ask the Member for Lake Melville, why is pavement

starting on the newest part of the road when it was announced –

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

MS DEMPSTER: – Phase II, now they are doing Phase III, and they are going back because there is no plan, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Listen, I do not mind any commentary from the other side, Mr. Speaker, because she knows I am more than willing to sit and work with them, as I always do. I invite them to briefings and we talk about what is good for Labrador and what is best for Labradorians and what is best for the Province, no problem.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, I am just going to talk about a few other things; \$600,000 in this year's Budget for teacher housing in Rigolet and Nain. Again, that is not in my district but it is in Labrador, it is in Northern Labrador, and that is in Torngat Mountains. You need to put that money there to make sure – and it is difficult for people who are not experienced with living in the North to just come and live in Labrador.

So what do we do? We make sure that we are going to be able to help those teachers out with those costs. We are going to make sure that in these smaller communities there is enough room for people to come in there and contribute, learn their trades, and help out with our best and our most important natural resource which is our children.

Having said that, we have the Provincial Home Repair Program, we have subsidies for low-income people, Mr. Speaker. I will go right back to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. We have \$5.8 million still going this year into our twenty-bed long-term care expansion. I cannot say enough about that. I thank the Minister of Health and Community Services for that, and the progress was remarkable. Even in minus thirty,

minus forty, you are seeing the tents they have the hot air blowing into, they rise and they rise. Right now it is really taking shape. I am very proud of that.

We have another \$1.8 million through supportive living. We understand that we have difficulties in Aboriginal communities. Even though we have a boom going on right now with Muskrat Falls, I am just going to say this, we have to put money where it is needed and we have to support our most vulnerable in society, and we do that well on this side of the House.

We are looking into things like homelessness, Mr. Speaker, shelters, social housing, making sure we increase our capacity. That is something that is going to be a never-ending battle, no matter which part of the Province you are talking about. I will say \$500,000 for a new oncology suite at the Labrador West Health Centre. It is much needed, Mr. Speaker.

We talked a little bit earlier, some of the people did, about the six additional front line Child, Youth and Family Services positions in Labrador, about \$500,000 investment in that. It is just wonderful to see that happening and to see us increase our capacity. This list goes on and on.

I cannot sit down, Mr. Speaker, without talking about the \$500,000 for the Labrador Winter Games, something that brings together every single community in Labrador to celebrate not only some of the Aboriginal games but games in general. It brings everybody together; lots of good food, lots of good company, and a celebration of recreation, sport, and fitness in our Province, which we can never do enough of. The list goes on and on and on.

I will make one final commentary, Mr. Speaker, about something I heard from across the way about our complete failure to diversify our economy. We take criticism, which is fine. I do not mind that at all, but the bottom line here is this. We watched what has happened to, and I will say to my colleague from Lab West. We watched what had happened in Wabush. When the commodity pricing takes a turn for the worse, people cannot continue to invest the same amount of money in mining. We watched that, but I tell you what we already watched alongside

of that was this government's response for the people of Lab West and Wabush, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about diversification, look at Lower Churchill up in Labrador. It is one of the greatest natural wonders of the world I will say, Mr. Speaker, with its power. Here we are developing Muskrat Falls, and I am looking past Muskrat, I am looking to Gull Island. I am looking for this Province to become, and it has been said time and time again, an energy super warehouse. That is not to be taken lightly.

We have talked about arrangements with Nalcor, the people's company, a Crown corporation that is going to see hundreds of millions of dollars over the lifetime of this project, Mr. Speaker. We will all be dead and gone and hundreds of millions of dollars are going to be rolling into our kids, our grandkids, our great grandkids and all of that.

I just want to point this out in my last little bit of time here, Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to criticize. When you have the responsibility to govern and the mandate to govern, you have to be responsible in what you do. That is why this government looked at Muskrat Falls, looks out beyond Muskrat Falls and it looks into Gull Island as well about what is next. What is next? A bump in the road like the pricing of oil is not going to stop us. We are going to keep on rolling, keep the juggernaut going.

I tell you what, none of them, no matter which party they happened to be with at the time the debate took place, because there has been some shifting over there and that is fine, none of them supported it. Everybody up there right now working, they are getting top wages, expanding on their careers, getting courses as they go, people from all over the Province and all over the country in some cases coming in there to get a piece of that pie, none of them on that side of the House voted for it, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is this, it takes vision, it takes foresight, Mr. Speaker, it takes the ability to see past one bump in the road, like the downturn in oil pricing right now, and to be able to do just what we are going to do in the next couple of months which is lay out this five-year plan and let the people of the Province decide. Do you want a steady hand at the wheel to carry us

forward, Mr. Speaker? Do you want to keep going into what we had over the last decade or so in this Province? I tell you what; I do, for me, my family, and for everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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.

I am certainly honoured again to stand in this hon. House and speak on behalf of the constituents of the District of Virginia Waters to the Budget. As somebody who has spoken at length about the Budget in this House, getting an extra twenty minutes to do it again is an absolute privilege; particularly after I have had the chance to listen to members opposite speak about their feelings as they represent their constituents who elected them on this Budget.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points from the previous speaker that I would just like to highlight before I get into my comments. The Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs took I think it was almost seven minutes to talk about the great things that he felt had been done for Labrador.

I would ask the member opposite if he would thank the people on this side of the House who made sure that when this government tried, for its own purposes, to manipulate electoral reform and failed to recognize the importance of Labrador, that his government was the one that wanted to cut the representation in Labrador, Mr. Speaker. That is what I would remind the member opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I have heard two of my hon. colleagues on the opposite side of the House speak today about 2041.

MR. RUSSELL: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order, the hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I just could not sit here and take that level of ridiculousness. I certainly was a heavy advocate for the maintenance of the four seats in Labrador – guaranteed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry. There is no point of order.

MR. RUSSELL: It was this leadership and this Premier, Mr. Speaker, which made that happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS C. BENNETT: I have heard members opposite today speak specifically about 2041 as the destination that we are all excited to get to. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the people who are speaking to me in my district about how the Budget is going to impact them are more concerned about today than they are about 2041 today.

I can tell you that after eighteen months of consecutive year over year job losses, people in my district – and I believe people in many of our districts including those who are in the districts represented by the people opposite in this House – are very concerned about those job losses and this government's failure to prepare and plan for the inevitability of what has happened with the oil prices.

I have listened to the debate here over the last number of days and watched members opposite continue to talk about how the oil price and the drop in oil price was something that was unexpected, unpredicted, and unforeseen. Yet, Mr. Speaker, all of us, I am sure, wants to do our homework in this House when we come in to speak about important issues. If you look at the historical results of oil pricing, it does not take very long to see that what we are experiencing

now is very similar to what has happened with oil prices in the past at certain periods of history.

Actually, I find it quite surprising that members opposite would try to say that not only is the fiscal situation that the government finds itself in related to an unusual event like oil prices, but then to further exacerbate that by blaming the economy – the lack of attention that this government has placed on diversifying the economy in the last twelve years, to say that is a result of the oil prices in 2014, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think it is atrocious.

Only 3 per cent of the jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador that people work at are in the oil industry. The vast majority of jobs in this Province are created by industries other than oil. While there is no doubt, nobody in this House will argue, the incredible revenue opportunity this government has had with \$20 billion worth of oil royalties and \$5 billion worth of Atlantic Accord money, I think many people in the Province would question: Well, where did the economic diversification come from on that? Where did the job opportunities for young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians come from that? Was this government focused more on revenue than they were on people? Mr. Speaker, I would argue that is the case and that is the symptom of what we are seeing today in this Budget.

This is the same government who – the member opposite who just spoke talked about governing with principles. Mr. Speaker, I remind those listening at home, and those in the House of Assembly here today, that this is the same government that when they had to replace their own leader, when a Premier resigned, all of a sudden decided that a paving bond was no longer going to be important, cancelled a paving bond, and used their own ability to make decisions for political purposes.

Mr. Speaker, I think the people of the Province are going to understand what the priorities are for this government and they are going to see very clearly that the decisions they are making are in their own political best interests and not in the best interests of the people of the Province.

For the member opposite to call what is going on in Newfoundland and Labrador in the last twelve

to eighteen months a bump in the road, quite frankly, I would ask him to open up his own government's Budget document called *The Economy 2015* and go to page 13 where every single key economic indicator is forecasted by this government to decline over the next three years. Not only was it forecasted to decline in this document, in last year's document the same numbers were forecasted to decline.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at GDP – seven years of consecutive GDP growth between what has already happened and what this government has forecasted. Household disposable income forecasted to decline. Capital investment forecasted to decline. Housing starts forecasted to decline and employment – this one is absolutely stunning – 12,000 people will be moved out of the workforce based on this government's numbers.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the Province who are feeling the impacts of the economy and the economy that is being created by this government, being managed by this government, they have a very, very sharp and crisp view of this Budget.

I have listened to members opposite speak for the last number of days about government spending and how important it was to invest. I listened today as my hon. colleague questioned the Acting Minister of Education on the school that is going to be constructed in the east part of the hon. member opposite's district. I have to say I was stunned to hear a Minister of the Crown say that to build a building now that was the right size for the future would not be in the best interest of the taxpayers, the people of the Province.

When people in communities like Carbonear have spoken to me about what happened with that school out there, a school that was built and then immediately, that September, had to be reconstructed. This government had to go back in and build four classrooms back on to that school because it was built too small. Do you know what people in that district said? Do you know what people around the Province said? They said: Who in their right mind would build a house, for example, and not put the kitchen in and go back in after and try to add the kitchen to

that house? What kind of cost would you have if you went to do that construction after the fact?

Mr. Speaker, this document here, which government used as part of its promotional material – *Solid Investments in Provincial Infrastructure* – dozens and dozens of examples of projects that this government announced that were going to cost this much, and then at the end of the day when the projects were actually completed, the costs skyrocketed – skyrocketed. Many of those projects are not even finished.

Capital investment money has to be spent in a way where we avoid scope creep, where we have better project management, and we make sure that what we plan actually is what gets executed. I think the expectation of taxpayers that money that is spent on capital, whether it is the courthouse in Corner Brook, or some would argue, Muskrat Falls, actually comes in on budget – actually comes in at the cost that government said it is going to actually come in on.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Minister of Service NL speak today earlier about the Confederation Building renovations – and let me be clear –

AN HON. MEMBER: Transportation and Works.

MS C. BENNETT: Transportation and Works. My apologies; they move so often, Mr. Speaker, it is hard to keep track.

This side of the House has asked repeatedly questions about the cost. I would 1000 per cent agree with the member opposite that the safety of employees in this building is important; but, Mr. Speaker, one thing that you do when you take on a construction project, is you actually do really, really good work upfront to make sure that you control your costs.

I am sure many people in this House have heard the analogy measure twice, cut once – measure twice, cut once – and that is a fundamental principle in capital investment. You make sure that you plan, you design, and you work out all of the information upfront to make sure that your costs are fixed. So when you negotiate with a contractor, that contractor knows exactly how much money they are going to be allowed

to spend on a project, and the plans that are in place are actually going to be the ones that are going to be executed.

Mr. Speaker, I listened as well over the last couple of days on this phraseology that comes out of the members on the government side where they talk about – and maybe I would hope that I did not hear it the way that I have written it here; I would hope that they would correct me. I have heard several members on the opposite side of the House say that when it comes to the Auditor General's reports, our government is proud that we have 90 per cent completed or in progress, is what they said – 90 per cent completed or in progress. Well, or in progress, I remind the members opposite, is not complete.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's standard for completion after two years is 80 per cent – two years, 80 per cent. This government in the 2014 recommendations, guess what their completion per cent was? It was 54 per cent. It was not 80 per cent, but 54 per cent.

In 2013, the completion record of this government after the two-year allowable time to hit the standard of 80 per cent, this government achieved 71 per cent. In 2012, after two years this government achieved an amazing completion rate against a standard of 80 per cent of 51 per cent – 54 per cent, 71 per cent, 51 per cent, against the AG's standard of 80 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the AG actually recognizes that sometimes on rare, rare occasions it might be difficult for government to hit the 80 per cent, so he gives them another two years to hit the 90 per cent standard.

In 2014, after four years – the 2014 recommendations after four years, when he looked back over the four-year recommendations that were supposed to be completed, the target was 90 per cent. What do we think this government achieved? The target is four years they have had to execute the recommendations, 90 per cent is the target. In the 2014 recommendations, it was 77 per cent. In 2013, it was actually a pretty good year. They almost got to 90 per cent. They completed 87 per cent, but in 2012, 76 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, why are the AG's recommendations important? Well, the Auditor

General is the most important external consultant that the House of Assembly has. That office is the office that comes in and audits systems and processes to make sure that the taxpayers' money and revenue the Province receives is spent wisely.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the question that I am asked frequently: If it takes four years to get to a 90 per cent completion on recommendations that the Auditor General makes to save taxpayers money, it is actually quite logical that the Minister of Finance would finally stand up in this House and admit that now this government needs to create a culture of cost management. Now, after twelve years.

I was knocking on doors last weekend and this lovely gentleman, who is in his seventies, came to the door and said: Ms Bennett, that whole cost management culture, can you ask the government what exactly have they been doing?

When I heard one of the members opposite talk about and make this statement: when times are tough, that is when you have to watch your pennies. We remember that. I think it was very early on in the debate, probably the first or second person who spoke: when times are tough, that is when you watch the pennies. Well, Mr. Speaker, people of the Province expects government to watch the pennies every single day. That is why they elect us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, this government wants people to believe they have everything under control and they have a plan to deal with, quite frankly, a crisis that they created – that they created.

Mr. Speaker, their solution is to ask for a free pass from the people of the Province while they reach their hands into the pockets and wallets of hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and taking money out at a time when our economy is contracting. This government is out of touch with what is happening in our communities, is out of touch with what is happening in our economy. Quite frankly, when it comes to implementing economic policy that is going to contract our

economy at the same time as they are pontificating about growing it, is farcical.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the Province I do not believe will be hoodwinked by the Tory spin any more. I think the people of the Province are listening very intently to what both sides of the House of Assembly are saying. They are listening to every single one of us as elected representatives to make sure that when we stand up in this House we are standing up and speaking about the facts for today and not the faded memories of a government that is past its due date.

Our economy is critically important to those people who want to live here. When we have a population challenge like we have in our Province with the fastest aging population and the oldest median age, government must show leadership. Instead, we see this government spend money on a Youth Retention Attraction Strategy and turn their backs on it. We have seen them repeatedly talk about a population strategy and turn their backs on it, and keep telling us that soon it is coming, soon it is coming.

Mr. Speaker, the only way we are going to solve the population problem that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the inverted population pyramid, which we must do, is to aggressively find opportunities. The way to do that is not to depend on a revenue that does not create jobs but to create revenue from industries that do create jobs; whether it is the forestry, whether it is the fishing industry, whether it is agriculture, aquaculture, whether it is manufacturing, whether it is the service sector, whether it is the information technology sector. All of those pieces of our GDP must grow in order for there to be jobs created so young people will stay and live and work in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, to hear the members opposite speak about their government's track record, I think it is brave of them to do that. I also think it is foolhardy. I think when they knock on the doors as we prepare for our general election they are going to hear the same comments that we are hearing on our side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

For that reason, I look forward to standing up and speaking as often as I can about a Budget that is about the Tories more so than it is about the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is great to get up and have an opportunity to speak for a little bit today.

Before I begin, I just want to talk a little bit about what I was doing this past weekend. I went to the Island of St. Brendan's and celebrated with the graduating class of this year at St. Gabriel's All Grade School. There were two students.

I know the Member for Burgeo – La Poile attended a graduation probably pretty similar to that in Grey River as well this past weekend, where I think there were three graduates in that one. Something we commented on, even though it is a small class, obviously, of only two or three students but the graduation and the celebration they put off can match any graduation here in St. John's with 200 students.

You get all of the members of the community coming out and everybody is so supportive. A number of the students who come from St. Brendan's, as I have said before, they are very high achievers and they go on to do some remarkable things with their lives.

I want to wish Eric and Amy, the two graduates, all the best in their future endeavours. I am sure they are going to make the island very proud.

I also want to pass along some condolences to the Mayor of St. Brendan's. She is a good friend of mine. Whenever you visit St. Brendan's, you are always sure to be met with hospitality. There are not restaurants or cafés in St. Brendan's but there is always a mayor's door

that is open. If she is not home, it is open – I should not be broadcasting that, I suppose. Maybe she will start to lock it now. It is always left open for you. You can always stop in and help yourself. The hospitality there is remarkable. It is something that is appreciated.

She is actually going through a tough period in her life right now. She just had her sister pass away. She was dealing with that while the graduation was going on. She is a great lady, I just want to say. She is in our thoughts and prayers. Keep up the great work.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if I can change gears now. I am not going to talk about the Member for Bay of Islands and the comments that were made late last week. I do not want to spend time talking about the disparaging comments that were made about me and my religion. I am not going to do that because I understand that is with the Speaker for a decision.

I will say I have heard quite a bit from people this weekend when I went back in my district. It was certainly reassuring to hear those comments. I look forward to that decision. I look forward to commenting on that further.

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

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, once again, he is bringing up things that were not said in the House. There is one thing I will not do is go ahead and make accusations about the former Chief Justice of the Province about giving bribes.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

MR. S. COLLINS: As usual, Mr. Speaker, there is no point of order. That is exactly right. He brings up topics, I have no idea what he is talking about, but the fact is everybody out there saw it. I have a neat little clip that was sent to me actually. A constituent of mine sent it to me and he said: What was he saying? I have the clip. I can send it to the member if he would

like to hear it and the contents of that clip. It certainly was offensive to myself and that same feeling was shared by a number of constituents of mine. Perhaps some of his constituents as well, but we will certainly see how that comes out once everybody gets to see the clip.

It is funny the member mentioned about Elizabeth May and how I said that the MP had put her foot in her mouth last week. It is funny that the Member for Bay of Islands had made a career of putting both feet in his mouth. I think that was an example of just that last week.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I will not belabour that point because I look forward to speaking further to that point of privilege later in this week. Certainly, if the member has anything to add to his comments that he made the other day, I would encourage him to stand up so everyone can hear him because they did hear him last week. They never heard all the stuff he has been saying but they got a snippet of it. They get a feel and a taste for what that member stands for and how he conducts himself in the people's House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on. I have stood in my place in this –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MR. S. COLLINS: If the Member for Bay of Islands would please be quiet, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. S. COLLINS: Thank you. I appreciate that.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

I will try to continue. I have stood in my place in this exact spot and I have criticized the Leader of the Opposition many times for being inconsistent. You know, we have a number of

examples of how the Leader of the Opposition has been inconsistent and perhaps one of my favourite flip-flops, if you will, has been recently with the electoral boundaries, Bill 42, and how that all unraveled.

We only have to think about how that did unravel. The member came out against it, then he was for it, and then he was against it. Then some of his party was against and some of them were for it. Of course we watched it all come out within a twelve-hour period. He was coming here; he was there. He was moving his opinions from here and there. That was one of my favourite ones.

It is interesting; we talk about Bill 42 and how that played out. We only have to look across the way and how some of the members across the way handled that. Let me set the groundwork first. We debated Bill 42 electoral reform. As I recall, all members on the government side, as well as all members of the Official Opposition, the Liberal Party, voted in support of Bill 42 – all members. As I recall, everyone was here, everyone stood and supported it.

It was only after the proposed boundary changes came out that we had a number of members across the way, one in particular which I found amusing. Actually I was listening to the call. The Member for St. Barbe called in from his homestead in Ontario. He made the point of saying this is not going to work; this is no good. It was no good because of course it was not any good for him.

Certainly I would say to the Member for St. Barbe that when we vote on things in this House it is not whatever is best for you, it is what is best for people. I thought initially that is what it was when we all stood and voted for Bill 42. We were all in agreement in it. We all agreed with electoral reform. Of course the Leader of the Opposition tries to own it but then you have members, like I said, the Member for St. Barbe coming out on public radio saying well, maybe we should have a free vote and perhaps I am going to vote against it. Even though I voted for it, I think now we are going to vote against it.

It is good. We have arrived at a spot now, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for St. Barbe now is looking at running in –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

He is now looking at running in Lewisporte which is great. So you had Todd Manuel, the member that the Liberals wanted to put there. Now of course you have the Member for St. Barbe being pushed over into Lewisporte. It is really interesting how everything unfolds. It is much like of course in Botwood with Jerry Dean who wanted to run and the Liberals did not want him. They are trying to insert other people in those seats. It is going to be interesting to see how all that unfolds.

I can tell you when I stand in this House and I vote on something as serious as electoral reform and Bill 42, I stood by it. Mr. Speaker, there is not one single member in this House who is any more affected by Bill 42 than me. When I voted for it, I voted for it because electoral reform I agree with. I voted for it.

It affects me heavily, maybe negatively. Maybe I will not have a district to run in, but I still stand by my decision. I still stand by the fact that I have stood in this House and voted for it. That is certainly not going to change. I think it really shows character on behalf of others when you are so quick to change it when it does not benefit you personally.

So I have been talking about the Leader of the Opposition and how he has been inconsistent. I have said that many times. It has been great recently to see that he has been consistent. He has changed it. He has changed direction. He is trying to be consistent, and that is great. I certainly appreciate it. One only need look at the interview that was done on *The Carter File, Issues and Answers* on NTV, *On Point*, and *CBC CrossTalk*. I am sure many members here and those in the public have seen the Leader of the Opposition on four of those programs being interviewed.

It was interesting because he was very consistent – very consistent. He consistently did not know the answer. He was consistently asked questions: What would you do? What would you do? He was consistent in the fact that he

never answered. His answers were always consistent. So he consistently sidestepped, he consistently avoided the question, and he consistently did not answer any question. It was interesting to see the host of one of those shows in particular, David Cochrane, because he kept going at him – one question, two questions, three questions; the same question and no, Sir, would he answer it.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the people out in TV land think about it, this is the person who is trying to position himself and his party to lead this Province and he cannot answer a question while in Opposition. Opposition, they have the easiest jobs in the world, but they still cannot put anything together. Again, he was consistently indecisive, one interview after another. It is one thing for me to pick it up because I watch those things, I am a political watcher, but I have been hearing out and about as well people saying: Do you know what? I am not so sure about this Leader of the Opposition. Even people who were kind of siding with him before – and I have spoken to those people saying: Boy, you know, I am really going to give him a look. That is changing and it is from that consistency of being indecisive, Mr. Speaker; it does not flow well with people. When you have to lead a province, you have to be decisive in your decisions and that certainly is not where he is.

It is interesting – again, I am a political watcher, so I like looking at things and making commentary on it. There were a couple of things, and this is particularly relevant on the Budget. There were a couple instances in the past number of weeks and you have seen the Liberal Leader come out against the HST and he was pretty quick to come out. As soon as he heard it, he was out. He was out (inaudible) –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. S. COLLINS: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: He was going to borrow money.

MR. S. COLLINS: Well, that is what I am getting to. He was very quick – he never talked to his handlers and the ‘comms’ people, he just darted out there very quick and he wanted to make sure that the people of the Province were

aware that if elected he would repeal the HST. Now what the Leader of the Opposition was not aware, the Finance critic was out too because she was pretty keen on making an opinion and making her opinions known so she got out very quickly as well.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Bay of Islands has something to say, I would invite him to get up – speechless.

MR. SPEAKER: On a point of order?

MR. JOYCE: He said I could stand up and speak.

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry the hon. member has no speaking time room available.

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

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

So we had the Leader of the Opposition coming out very quickly and saying we repeal the HST. When the reporters asked him, you are going to repeal the HST, well, hold on now, where are you going to come up with that? Because that is about \$180 million to \$200 million. Where are you going to come up with that? We are going to borrow. Okay, fair enough, so you are going to borrow that.

Then his Finance critic, the second in charge over there, the person who, of course, wanted to be leader as well, and I applaud her on her effort. She wanted to come out and have an opinion on it. What did she say? Boy, I am kind of troubled with the borrowing that is going on. We have to try to rein in spending and borrowing. We cannot be borrowing. It is a direct contradiction to her leader.

So then I was thinking, it reminded me of a TV show back in the 1980s. Do remember that, Mr. Speaker, *Who's the Boss*, with Tony Danza? That is what I was saying. I was saying, who is the boss? Who is the boss? Because you have the leader saying one thing, and the person who wanted to be leader, and the Finance critic who sits in the front bench next to the Opposition

Leader, who says something completely different.

Mr. Speaker, what is even more interesting than that is the reaction –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, please let me continue.

What I find even more interesting than that, Mr. Speaker, is how it all unfolded. You only have to look back at the last week. The Liberals came out with their big plan that has been heralded for weeks and months – the big plan. I could not wait to see it, because I was expecting that I would look at it and say, boys, why didn't we think of that? What a great idea. I thought it was going to be earth-shattering. The press they had around it was just fantastic. It had me – I was sitting on pins and needles. I cannot wait to see it, but I know I am going to be bitter because I wish we had thought of that.

So what was the plan? They called it LEAP. Russell Wangersky called it creep. Russell Wangersky called it lame, but they called it LEAP. So that is fine. LEAP, Liberal economic action project, I believe.

Who was on the board? The Finance critic was not there. So then I was thinking, why wasn't the Finance critic there? She is a financial guru. She sits in the front bench, next to her other leader. Why wasn't she there? Then I was thinking, who is there? Well, you had two people who were not elected to the House of Assembly, two candidates. I am not going to talk about – do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I could say a lot, but I am not going to talk about those two candidates, because that is fair, and I respect them if they want to run for a job.

If I could, please –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

What we had, it was a very, very obvious absence. The Finance critic was nowhere to be found. Then I was thinking, well, obviously she is not there because she came out and contradicted her leader just a week previous. So now we have the LEAP, the Liberal economic action project, or creep as it has been called, because it is creeping in to getting some ideas, creeping in to maybe announcing something. We give you a little bit, but we take it right back.

She was not there. We see now how the Liberal Leader – we see how he operates. If you contradict him that is what happens. It is rather unfortunate, because I know the Member for Virginia Waters is very capable. For her not to be there is a big absence. It is also more troubling to see that they could not put any of their elected members on it. They had to reach outside and have unelected members go in on that.

MR. A. PARSONS: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, on a point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister finds it unfortunate that the Member for Virginia Waters was not there. It is unfortunate that an elected person does not show up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: So I ask the member, where was Judy Manning at most of the last justice things that have happened?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the minister, when a point of order is being delivered he should take his seat and wait to be recognized until after the ruling.

There is no point of order.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, there are so many point of orders when I stand to talk and there are so many nerves that I can just poke at, it is so easy. It reminds me of back when you are in Kindergarten, you can just poke at someone and they get all inflamed and they get all riled up.

Do you know why they get riled up? Because everything I am saying is true. The Member for Virginia Waters is obviously upset. Members across the way are obviously upset, and that is fine. I think what I am going to talk about now in my last six minutes is going to upset them even more. I would like to remind all the people of the public –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

I would like to remind all the people of the public about a little cold plate fundraiser dinner that the Liberals had a little while ago. Actually, let me tell you a little bit about the fundraiser because it never got much media attention. That is probably because it was held outside the Province. Let me talk about this. Back in March, I think it was – so we all know –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: Let me set the table, no pun intended. We understand that the provincial Liberal Party is drowned in debt; debt as red as the party logo. Now, we also know they are dragging in federal candidates, whoever they can, to masquerade around and try to raise some money. That has been doing pretty good for them, Mr. Speaker, but they needed that one big hit.

What are they going to do? Enter Brian Tobin. Everybody remembers Brian Tobin, particularly the Province's nurses remember Brian Tobin. Remember those clever little licence plates: Mr. Tobin, we will remember. Everybody remembers him. So enter Mr. Tobin. Now he is

going to be the champion of the Newfoundland Liberal Party again. We know how that story ended last time, but let's see what the next chapter is going to be.

Mr. Tobin comes in and he says we are going to bring you to the Promised Land now. We are going to have a fundraiser and we cannot have it in Newfoundland for a number of reasons. It needs to be very secretive. We are not going to get the people to go there in Newfoundland because who can afford it.

How much did people pay to get the Liberal Leader Opposition's ear? How much do you think he paid? Is it \$500, no; \$1,000, no; \$5,000, no; \$9,000, no. You are getting there – \$10,000 a plate.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, \$10,000 a plate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: Well, I would say, what does someone expect to get for \$10,000? If I paid \$10,000 for chicken and mashed potatoes, I expect something more than chicken and mashed potatoes. What is it they expected? I do not know. It is very disturbing. I do not even want to try to guess at what they expected, but it does not sound very kosher to me, Mr. Speaker. Now, there were only twenty-five people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask members to be respectful in the House and for the debate to be respectful.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services to continue.

MR. S. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to catch my breath.

What I was saying, how many people attended this secret dinner in Ontario organized by Brian Tobin? Who attended? Twenty-five people.

Who were those twenty-five people? I have no idea. We have no idea. You in TV land have no idea. They are the only crowd who knows. Twenty-five people paying a quarter-million dollars for a plate of dinner to get the ear of the Leader of the Opposition and former Premier Brian Tobin.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: Does it pass the smell test? I do not think so. I do not know, but it leads me to ask the question –

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: The minister –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Would the member wait to be recognized?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, I will.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, on a point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister is implying wrongdoing that there was a fundraiser that occurred.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: They will not let me finish, Mr. Speaker.

He is implying wrongdoing: What did they expect to get? Again, I have to say that there is an implication of wrongdoing, one that –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: (Inaudible) \$5,000 a plate dinner.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I would never, ever stand in this House and suggest there was wrongdoing, but what I am suggesting is people are wondering who paid that money and what did they get in return aside from the chicken and mashed potatoes. That is what I am asking. If the member would like to stand and instead of trying to misconstrue my words, answer my question. Who went, and what was the arrangement?

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member for Burgeo – La Poile, on a point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: As the member should know, this is all covered under Elections Newfoundland and Labrador and the full information will be posted. As for the regulations, if the minister has an issue with that, I would suggest he change the law as they promised to do back in –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

MR. S. COLLINS: It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am hitting the buttons because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador expect to know and they deserve to know, who paid the \$10,000?

Do you know what? I am not surprised, because we still have members across the way in their leadership bids who still have not disclosed hundreds of thousands of dollars that people

gave to them during their leadership, as opposed to our three candidates, including our Premier and Deputy Premier, who disclosed everything in an audited statement. That is leading by example –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: – and that is something we clearly do not see. So I would say to the crowd across the way, instead of wasting my time and everybody else's time, come out with it. Tell us who went to the \$10,000 cold plate.

It is disgusting. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to know. I would say actions speak louder than words. I can proudly stand behind our Premier who quickly came out after a leadership bid and disclosed everything, as opposed to the Finance critic and the LEAP committee – who we have all been speaking about earlier, Mr. Antle – who have not disclosed anything.

Where have the hundreds of thousands of dollars gone? Where have they gone? Who paid the \$10,000 for a cold plate in Ontario? The media was not allowed in. Cameras were not allowed in. What was discussed and who paid it?

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the House ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Shall the sub-amendment pass?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: The sub-amendment is defeated.

On motion, sub-amendment defeated.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

We just voted the sub-amendment so we will go back to the amendment.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Yes, perhaps I am not clear. Procedurally, I thought we just continue with the debate back on the regular amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, you are correct.

MR. KING: Okay, but since I have the floor, Mr. Speaker, under Standing Orders, I want to give notice under Standing Order 9 that the House will not close at 5:30 o'clock this coming Thursday, and under Standing Order 10 that we will not close at 10:00 p.m. this coming Thursday, May 21, 2015. Those are notices of motion.

We will continue with the Budget Debate.

MR. SPEAKER: We will continue with the Budget Debate. We will move back to the amendment of the main motion. I will recognize speakers on the amendment.

Seeing none, is the House ready for the vote?

Shall the amendment pass?

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I think I have not spoken on the amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: You are correct.

MR. J. BENNETT: I would like to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I was speaking to the sub-amendment, Mr. Speaker, there was not enough time to go through all the areas of excess waste of this

government. So I would like to be able to continue right on exactly where I was before. We were going through all the areas of discretionary spending. This government, department by department by department, decided to spend more money in times when they say that we are having difficult times – and clearly we are.

Where we are put with these difficult times – but this government this year has run short around \$3 billion. Mr. Speaker, \$1.1 billion is going to be the deficit, the overrun. That is like putting money on your credit card. You put \$1.1 billion on a credit card, and in addition to that government is borrowing \$2 billion. That is like putting \$2 billion more on the mortgage. This government is in a situation this year where they say in a Province of 500,000 people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. J. BENNETT: - they are going to run us further in debt by \$3 billion this year.

Mr. Speaker, we have come pretty much 360 degrees with this government from when they took power in 2003. When they took power in 2003 we had very limited revenue, we were drowning in debt, and we had a Budget which was in the area of \$4 billion. This government now has doubled their spending. Their spending is twice as high as it was twelve years ago and now the revenue has started to fall off.

Part of the reason that the revenue has started to fall off is because earlier on we took Atlantic Accord money, we had it all grossed up and paid in a lump sum. We will remember when one of the former Premiers came back and said: We got it, we got it. We got the \$2 billion. That money then was taken and approximately \$1.9 billion of the \$2 billion was put straight into a pension deficit.

Of course, the stock market crashed and we lost approximately one-third of that right straight out of the gate. So, that money was gone. Approximately one-third of it was gone. It was not prudent at that time just to take that money and whack it into stocks, but that is what this government did.

The spending that they have continued to go through, if you follow straight from their Budget document, if you look at the type of spending that they are doing this year – so in Transportation and Works, for example, on Page 7.11 of the Budget, if you look at Administrative Support and Design, Transportation and Communications, last year's Budget was \$72,000. This year on that same line item – and this is, "Appropriations provide for design work, administrative services, traffic engineering, and soils and paving materials for the highway and bridge construction program." Last year, in that area they spent \$72,000. This year it was \$379,000; that is five times as much money this year.

I know it is only \$300,000-and-some-odd, but it is the small items that keep on compounding, and compounding, and compounding. I noted 106 items this year in this year's Budget. Mr. Speaker, 106 items of discretionary spending increases that this government made at or near the top line, at or near the minister's office. Government just reached out and spent more money than last year. Why they would spend more money this year than last year is completely beyond me. It makes you wonder who is really in charge of the spending.

When I spoke before I was dealing with the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. One item, Special Celebrations and Events; last year the Salaries were \$102,200 and this year \$125,000. Mr. Speaker, that is a 22 per cent increase in Salaries for Special Celebrations and Events in a year when we are going to run a billion-dollar deficit.

Is this because it is an election year? We are spending 22 per cent more money on that line item for Salaries for Special Celebrations and Events. Is this so government can go around the Province all summer long and brag about the great job they doing, and do it on the taxpayer's tab? That is what it seems like.

Last year in Loans, Advances and Investments we gave \$4.5 million to the Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation. This year it is \$4.955 million. That is a 10 per cent increase across the board, an extra \$455,000 as a grant going to the Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation. It is no

discredit to the NL Film Development Corporation if they would want to proceed, but to give them a 10 per cent increase in a year, this year, when we are running a billion-dollar deficit, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to be absolutely abhorrent to regular working people, people on fixed incomes, people on Income Support, all of whom are going to have to suffer with an extra 2 per cent across the board on the HST.

A real irony with the HST, Mr. Speaker, is that approximately eight or nine years ago a new party came to power with a majority government in Ottawa and they were called the Conservative Party. I am not sure what this party is called, I think Progressive Conservative Party. One of the ironies is that the Prime Minister of Canada, an economist, Stephen Harper – whatever you feel about him, a brilliant man in his own right – had an idea that he should be lowering the GST.

The Harper government has lowered the GST. They lowered it from 7 per cent to 6 per cent and 6 per cent to 5 per cent. So that has reduced the HST in this Province to 13 per cent. Now this government has decided that what Stephen Harper has given us they are going to take away.

If you could imagine that people in this Province would understand this government is being more harsh, they are being more cruel to the people on fixed incomes than Stephen Harper – that is what we are talking about; Stephen Harper is giving the people something and this government is taking it away. It is absolutely unbelievable.

If people look at the true outline of where this spending is going – and one member who I can see, the Member for Gander, has indicated he is going to run for the federal Conservative Party. Based on the choices of where he is coming from, it is probably a better choice for the people – the federal Conservative Party is probably a better choice for the people of this Province than the Progressive Conservative government that runs the provincial party, runs the provincial government.

If Stephen Harper is going to be kinder to the old people and give them back a GST portion of the HST and then –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) seniors.

MR. J. BENNETT: I am not being politically correct enough. That is another version of PC, I guess, politically correct. However, all of the people who are at or near the poverty line, all of the people who are being impacted the most with the increase of the 2 per cent on the HST – that is 2 per cent that Stephen Harper gave back to us. Stephen Harper gives it back – it is almost like the Canadian Tire commercial, spend like Santa and save like Scrooge except in this case we have Scrooge down here and we have Santa up in Ottawa, which I do not think many people would believe unless they could actually look at the numbers and see what is going on there.

Another area of provincial spending that government has jacked up is under Environment and Conservation. Mr. Speaker, it is right through the entire Budget at or near the top levels and these are the top levels of discretionary spending that the ministers can discuss, the ministers can negotiate, and the ministers can get more money for their favourite pet projects or their favourite people.

Under Habitat, Game and Fur Management, last year under Salaries, \$756,900; this year \$955,600 – an extra \$200,000 to either staff up more or provide more raises on a government that is already the most bloated government in Canada. On a per capita basis, it costs more money to govern this Province than any other province of Canada, and on an item like this \$200,000 more gone.

Under Research for Wildlife, it is gone up from \$868,000 to \$951,000 – another discretionary increase in spending. Another area which is absolutely intriguing is that most of us know that the federal government is responsible for fisheries research and the federal government is responsible for fisheries. Yet our Province, some years ago, decided that we could do it better. We could take over an area we were not responsible for. We have taken over a number of areas we are not responsible, so we are spending provincial dollars instead of lobbying hard enough with the federal government that the federal government pay the bill on these items.

Under Sustainable Fisheries Resource and Oceans Policy, the appropriation in ocean management and coastal oceans policy development with the federal government – and this is the same federal government that they refused to negotiate with on trade now. The salary level on that particular line item has gone from \$339,000 to \$417,000. Mr. Speaker, that is another \$77,000 or \$78,000 on that item. The money just seems to go just poof. So last year they budgeted \$400,000 and they actually spent \$339,000. They cranked the number back up and just keep on spend, spend, spend.

The next item under Fisheries and Aquaculture, which is absolutely intriguing, is if you can believe of all the rhetoric when they screwed up the CETA deal – when they screwed up the negotiations on the CETA deal if you can believe this, that last year this government budgeted \$804,000 for Salaries. This is for – if you can get this, under Fisheries Industry Renewal, Coordination and Support Services, “Appropriations provide for the administration and coordination of Fishing Industry Renewal Initiatives, programs and services to assist the Newfoundland and Labrador fishing industry become more economically sustainable and competitive, as well as planning and program development related to” – get this – “the Canada/EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)” This government is budgeting this year \$804,000 to co-ordinate support services for CETA, an agreement that they –

AN HON. MEMBER: They are not even there.

MR. J. BENNETT: They are not at the CETA table. They have withdrawn from trade negotiations with the government, and they are budgeting \$300,000 more than they spent on it last year. This is utter madness. It is absolutely madness to say we are not going to have any part of the CETA deal, but we need \$800,000 in Salaries on that line item, which is \$300,000 more than we had last year. This is supposed to be in a time of restraint.

Mr. Speaker, if you go down through the lines on that particular subhead, it is absolutely unbelievable. Purchased Services last year, \$5,700, and this year they want \$17,000 in the Estimates for co-ordination of support services

of CETA. I do not know if this means that they want to buy more erasers to erase some of the mistakes that they must have made.

Mr. Speaker, if you recall there was a big CETA discussion, a big CETA negotiation. For quite a number of years our Department of – I am not sure what they were called – IBRD, they were our lead negotiators. In fact they were not negotiating anything, they were our lead spectators. The feds actually negotiate. This is a provincial government; it is a sub-national government. It is a provincial government so the federal government does the negotiations, but the Europeans are smart enough to know – and the Europeans probably have a leg up on most people negotiating, at least in this Province, and say implementation is provincial, negotiation is federal. The feds can sign whatever they want and if the provinces do not implement it, it does not get done. It absolutely does not get done unless the provinces implement it. The Europeans know that the feds have to make the deal.

So you have the federal Canadian negotiators and the European Union negotiators negotiating. Then you have all of the provincial minister representatives, not even ministers, they are sitting in the background and they are watching and watching.

One of the very first briefings I had, I was the IBRD critic, so it was quite intriguing to go and be briefed with them. I am having a briefing and I say: What do you actually do? We do not actually do anything. What do you actually say? We do not actually say anything. What is your purpose to be there? We need to be there because we have to agree with whatever it is that the feds do, but we are not actually signatories.

Oh, okay, so let me get this straight. You are there. You are representing the Province. The feds are in negotiations. You do not actually do anything. You do not actually say anything. You do not actually sign anything, but the feds are going to make a deal with the Europeans and if we do not go along with it as a Province, and all the other provinces are the same, then there is going to be no deal.

Hold on now – I am kind of in a bit of a time warp here because roll forward a significant

period, a year or a couple of years or whatever, and at this point in addition to being the IBRD critic, I was also the Fisheries critic. We sort of got wind of the hallelujah, great big announcement. There was a fabulous announcement. The announcement was at The Rooms. I thought right on, I am going to get a chance to go down to The Rooms.

I head down to The Rooms and every member on the other side was there, as was the FFAW lead by the person who is now the Leader of the Third Party. The Third Party opposes CETA, but the President of the FFAW has a side deal going with this government. He has a deal going with them so the FFAW will do the implementation of the side deal with the government and, I guess, he must have retired so he could work on the CETA business. Then the whole CETA deal fell apart.

When the whole CETA deal fell apart, then we are left with – the government has one party over here who opposes it and they have a leader who is part of a deal with the provincial government, this government, but we do not actually have a deal because nothing was signed, but we had the party. So if you have the party and you did not sign any documents I am thinking well, hold on now, if you are sitting around doing a negotiation, if you are negotiating over a family law case, if you are negotiating over a highway traffic case, if you are negotiating over anything under the sun, then obviously you have lawyers in the room.

The Province has some lawyers and some pretty good lawyers because I know quite a few of them. I have been in contest with them and I have been in disputes with them. So the provincial lawyers are here but hold on now, we do not sign the CETA deal. The feds sign the CETA deal with the Europeans. We must have been ready to sign something with the feds. So we have a \$400 million deal coming out of this, whoa, \$400 million, but it is not actually \$400 million because \$120 million is our own money. You cannot say it is a \$400 million deal if you reached in your pocket or your taxpayers' pockets and you are going to put 30 per cent of it down – so really it is a \$280 million deal, but we have nothing on paper.

Mr. Speaker, I was watching a movie two nights ago, and I was fortunate that my wife managed to come down from the homestead in Ontario for the long weekend and we were watching a movie. The movie was called *Arbitrage*. It was a great movie; I recommend it. Richard Gere was the guy who was working out a deal. He is going along and he is working out the deal with the guy who he was not getting along with. They were in a restaurant and he says okay, we are going to write it up right now. He said: We are going to write it up right now? We are going to write it up right now. It was a major sale on a corporation. They were on Wall Street. They were in New York. The two guys sat down and they wrote up a piece of paper; they both signed it. They issued a press release and they had a deal, and our government cannot do that.

We have a government, we have time, we have lawyers and we have \$400 million, \$120 million of our money and \$280 million federal money, and we have the President of the FFAW onside and everything is wonderful and we are throwing a big party down at The Rooms and we have no deal. Now, we still have no deal, yet we go back to the Budget document and the government is budgeting \$804,000 this year for the Coordination and Support Services for the appropriations to provide for the administration and co-ordination –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

In accordance with Standing Order 9 and it now being 5:30 p.m. and the business of the House not concluded, this House shall adjourn until 7:00 p.m. We will return at 7:00 p.m.