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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 all members back to another week of orderly debate in the House of Assembly.

Today I would like to recognize and welcome representatives from the Conservation Corps Newfoundland and Labrador, along with Executive Director, Darren Feltham.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I would also like to recognize and welcome Early Childhood Educators: Mary Walsh, Joanne Morris, Gail Brinston, Valerie Collins, and Helen Sinclair.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear members' statements from Members representing the Districts of St. George's – Stephenville East, Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, Carbonear – Harbour Grace, Humber East, Virginia Waters, and St. Barbe.

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to make the House aware of an important project being undertaken by Writer – Director Michael Fenwick and a team of film students at the College of the North Atlantic in Stephenville.

The important project they are working on is to bring the story of the life of legendary Newfoundland musician Emile Benoit to the screen. Students and instructors of the Film and Video Production Program at the College of the North Atlantic have held a casting call for

people to help create the history by becoming part of the short film about Emile Benoit.

Emile Benoit was the talented French-Newfoundland fiddler from Black Duck Brook known for his unique style of fiddling, along with his wit and charm. The crew has been chosen, script written, all characters are established, and a number of lead roles and extras have been selected.

I would like the House to join with me in recognizing the important work of program instructors Peter Buckle, Keith Bonnell, Michael Fenwick, the students involved, and all those who have come forward to participate as cast members. I look forward to the film, Mr. Speaker.

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.

One of the most prestigious awards Canada offers to its young people is the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. Established in Canada in 1963, the tri-level non-competitive program encourages youth to set and achieve goals in the areas of community service, skills, fitness, and adventure.

Anyone who has been involved with a Duke of Edinburgh achiever can sing the praises of the program and tell you stories of how any given individual has learned new skills, made a difference in the community, or achieved an athletic goal they once thought impossible.

Of particular note is the COSTA initiative, which opens the Duke of Edinburgh Program to students with intellectual and physical disabilities.

Last Thursday, youthful achievers from all over the Province congregated at the CLB Armory to receive their Gold Level Duke of Edinburgh's Award from Governor General David Johnston.

Eleven of them live in my District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi and I would like to recognize of them by name. Congratulations to Garrett Barry, Alexandria Batten, Megan Clarke, Joseph Eddy, Amber Hodder, Julia Outerbridge, Sarah Predham, Camille Quirion, Abby Robbins, Alex Robbins, and Sean Winsor.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on April 23, 2015, I had the pleasure of attending the Town of Harbour Grace Annual Awards ceremony where the town recognizes many of its finest citizens. The ceremony is dedicated to the many volunteers, athletes, and members of the community who are actively involved in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to recognize Courtney Coombs who won both the 1992 Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games scholarship and the Doris Murcell Memorial Award as the female athlete of the year. She had previously won this award in 2012.

Courtney is an all-around athlete who excels in both competition and the classroom. She is active in soccer, volleyball, ball hockey, and cross-country running. She is an avid multi-sport athlete and is attending her first year of university.

The Town of Harbour Grace is very fortunate to have young people like Courtney and also Adam Slade, who was chosen as the male athlete of the year. They are the future of our communities and our Province, and to be recognized with such prestigious awards is a testament to their abilities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Courtney and wish her all the best in her future athletic and academic endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, May 21, the Duke of Edinburgh Award honoured program achievers who have entered their Gold Standard at a ceremony with His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston.

Since 1974, when the program was first introduced in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Duke of Edinburgh Award has been instrumental in helping thousands of young people develop qualities of leadership, personal discipline, and strength of character. Currently in our Province we have some 3,500 young people registered in the program, which is the highest per capita number of any Province in Canada.

I am very proud today to recognize three individuals from the District of Humber East, Dianna Alteen, Maria Filatre, and Marli Ver Mooten, who received the Gold Standard Award at a ceremony on Thursday. To achieve this award, these young people were required to set and accomplish personal goals within an eighteen-month period in five different areas which include service, skill, physical recreation, adventurous journey, and residential project.

I also want to thank the many adults involved in the program who offer guidance and support to all of these young people.

I ask hon. members to join me in congratulating Dianna, Maria, and Marli, and all the achievers in this fantastic accomplishment.

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 rise in this hon. House today to recognize a pioneer in many ways; Ms Rosemary Marshall who will be inducted into the Newfoundland and Labrador Hockey Hall of Fame 2015. Ms

Marshall was among the first female minor hockey coaches in this Province, and the first to serve as President of the St. John's Minor Hockey Association.

She was the only female in her class when she obtained her Level II coaching, before forming an atom-age team in St. John's and went on to take a club to the 1972 provincial competition in Labrador City. In 1976, the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association named her as an outstanding minor hockey award winner.

Recognizing the need for more ice surfaces, she played a major role in the construction of Twin Rinks and held the position of secretary for the Avalon Arenas Association. After the passing of her husband, Doug, in 2005 she joined with her sons, Steve, Ken, and Ian, in the sponsorship of the Doug Marshall Hockey League.

She was also the first female to serve as President of Sport Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing the legacy of Ms Marshall's involvement in youth sports.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador hosted the annual Tourism Excellence Awards 2015 on February 26, recognizing the outstanding tourism leaders and businesses that make great contributions to the provincial tourism industry. The Gros Morne region, in the St. Barbe district, won big.

Ocean View Hotel, Rocky Harbour, won the H. Clayton Sparkes Accommodator of the Year Award. This award recognizes an individual who exhibits dedication to quality service and makes a solid contribution to the community.

Gros Morne Co-operating Association won the JAC Tourism Champion of the Year Award. This award is presented to an individual, company, or organization that has worked

diligently to ensure that the tourism industry prospers.

Bonne Bay Marine Station, Norris Point, won the Sustainable Tourism Award. This award recognizes an industry operator who has made strides in sustainable tourism practices and continually works toward the protection of our natural and cultural resources.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Ocean View Hotel, Gros Morne Co-operating Association, and Bonne Bay Marine Station on winning these prestigious Tourism Excellence Awards.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before we go to statements by ministers, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize one of our own. Last Thursday afternoon one of our Pages, Raylene Mackey, was presented with the Caring Canadian Award by the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General.

The Governor General's Caring Canadian Award was created in 1995 to recognize individuals who volunteer their time to help others and to build a smarter and a more caring nation.

As Raylene's citation reads: Raylene Mackey has been a golf coach for Special Olympics athletes, and has contributed her time to St. Luke's Home. As a former Miss Teen Newfoundland and Labrador, she has improved the lives of others through a diverse range of volunteer activities at over 160 events across the Province. She continues to volunteer today with several local organizations.

Along with Raylene, there were ten other recipients of this prestigious award: Nitish Bhatt, Frank Millar Ewing, Dolores Flynn, Betty Gulliver, Josephine Anne Hickey, Keith Hillier, David Regular, Madelene Small, Melissa Thomas, and Ian Walsh.

Please join with me in congratulating Raylene and all the other recipients.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to acknowledge the designation of Thomas E. Ricketts as a Person of Provincial Significance.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour yesterday to participate in the designation ceremony in Conception Bay South. It was a humbling experience to stand before men and women who wear the uniform of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, as well as all other officers who serve in our Canadian Forces. I commend each of them for their ability to stand up for those whose daily lives are embroiled in conflict.

We are all familiar with the story of Thomas E. Ricketts, or as he is better known, Tommy Ricketts, as we have come to know him. Tommy Ricketts was a teenager from Middle Arm, White Bay, who joined the Newfoundland Regiment during the First World War as a fifteen-year-old boy. He went on to receive the Victoria Cross – the highest award for valour the British Empire could grant a soldier for his actions during an offensive in Belgium. Tommy Ricketts was the youngest soldier serving with the British Army during The Great War to receive the Victoria Cross and 100 years later we still honour his legacy.

Mr. Speaker, as we commemorate Tommy Ricketts, it is also important to take a moment to remember that during The Great War more than 6,000 men joined the Newfoundland Regiment and more than 12,000 served on land, in the air, on the sea, and in nursing services. It was for reasons such as these that the Provincial Historic Commemorations Program was developed, to recognize aspects of our collective culture and to pay tribute to the people, places, events, and traditions that make Newfoundland and Labrador unique.

To further honour Tommy Ricketts' memory and to commemorate his legacy of valour, the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs has provided \$25,000 towards the community park in Conception Bay South, a park that will stand as a legacy of Tommy Ricketts' service for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, the sacrifice of Tommy Ricketts and the brave individuals who served is an important part of our collective identity, of who we are today as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Their sense of duty shall never be forgotten and we are honoured to commemorate them in this way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement. Having been part of the ceremony yesterday, it is certainly an honour today to be able to stand and speak to this particular project.

As a high school teacher, Mr. Speaker, I taught fifteen and sixteen-year-olds, and I fully understand how unprepared boys like Tommy Ricketts were when they marched off to war in 1914-1915 but how they subsequently accredited themselves in the European theatre of war.

Mr. Speaker, this \$25,000 will be a good kick start to our new Tommy Ricketts' park in Conception Bay South which we are proud to develop in his memory. Yesterday was a strategically scheduled event, and I wonder how many more with subsequent financial announcements will take place as we get closer to a fall election.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, am honoured to stand with the Premier and the representative from CBS and honour Tommy Ricketts and his fellow soldiers –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – so many of whom were very young and who fought in World War I. The Great War was also known as the war to end all wars, a reflection of the hope of people of the time. One hundred years on, we know that hope was in vain, young Canadian men and women are still being sent into armed conflict.

I hope as we honour Tommy Ricketts and the sacrifices of so long ago, that we also hope for a time when such sacrifices are no longer required of our young people.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Acting Minister of Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise in this hon. House today to proclaim May 24–May 30 as Early Childhood Educators' Week in Newfoundland and Labrador. This week is a time to recognize the significant contribution child care professionals make in our Province.

Early childhood educators are the skilled professionals who are responsible for planning and delivering effective play-based curriculum to our children in the critical early learning years. Each and every day these educators recognize and build on a child's natural curiosity and imagination and evoke their learning through activities such as dramatic play, art, and social games.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we are fortunate to have over 1,200 practising ECEs working in many different settings and providing a variety of services. Early childhood educators work in regulated child care centres and family care centre homes. They work as business operators, in family resource centres, private consulting practices, and government departments. No matter what setting, early childhood educators bring their passion to educate children to the work that they do. Their commitment and dedication truly deserve the recognition that this week places on their profession.

Mr. Speaker, during this week, our Province's early childhood educators will have the opportunity to participate in professional development sessions, as well as open houses at child care centres and also have the opportunity to network with their colleagues and share best practices.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting and talking to representatives from the Association of Early Childhood Educators in Newfoundland and Labrador to proclaim Early Childhood Educators' Week. Their commitment and dedication to their profession was very evident throughout our conversation. The provincial government is very supportive of our early childhood educators and certainly the work they do. I look forward to working with them to further develop and improve early learning and child care services in this Province.

Today, I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing and thanking all early childhood educators in this Province for the essential role they have in ensuring the youngest members of our population have the best possible start in their lifelong learning and education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thanks to the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The Official Opposition, Liberal caucus, joins the minister in wishing a happy Early Childhood Educators'

Week to all of the ECEs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

ECEs play a vital role in our education system and increasingly they are recognized for their vital role. One of the best ways that we can ensure early childhood educators are properly compensated for their work – the best way to recognize them for their work is to properly compensate them for their work. In that regard we are woefully behind as a Province, despite all of the evidence that investing in early year's education is an economic investment.

We know that for every \$1 invested there is a short-term return of up to \$1.80 and a long-term return of up to \$17, particularly for at-risk children. Despite that, Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest wages paid for ECEs.

It's Time for Preschool report recently suggested that we had the lowest salary levels amongst all of the provinces. That report pointed out that we spend just 1.3 per cent of our Budget on ECEs. We have a long way to go, Mr. Speaker, but once again, I am happy to –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I am honoured to recognize and praise the highly skilled and dedicated early childhood educators we have in this Province. I wish them success in their activities this week, and I hope people throughout the Province get to see what is going on.

I am glad to see government acknowledging their contribution to our Province, but I urge government to do what it should do, and what would really be acknowledgement, and create an affordable and accessible public child care program that will pay good salaries to the early childhood educators, provide benefits to the

economy, and take care of the needs of the families of our Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to acknowledge the important work of Conservation Corps Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Conservation Corps is a provincial, charitable organization dedicated to providing youth with training and employment in environmental and cultural heritage conservation. It was created in 1992 with the goal of increasing quality employment, training and career development opportunities for young people. Since its inception, Conservation Corps has employed more than 2,500 people through its Green Team, Intern, and other employment programs.

In 2002, the Conservation Corps became the host organization for the Climate Change Education Centre, which has become a leader in the field of climate change education and outreach. Since its inception, the centre has been very successful in reaching various target audiences and increasing their capacity to understand and engage in actions aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

One of these key target audiences continues to be youth and to that end, the centre offers a Who's in Charge of Climate Change program in schools. Through funding support of \$147,000 obtained from the Department of Environment and Conservation last year, the centre was able to reach over 11,000 individuals in 485 classes throughout the Province.

In addition, the use of the Climate Change Club storybooks in Kindergarten to Grade 6 continues to create a value-added educational package that schools find very useful. The program format

includes all participating classes enjoying a reading of one of the stories, followed by a short PowerPoint presentation and class discussion.

Programming for junior high and high school classes is continually evolving; presentations are updated as severe weather events occur, new climate-related data is released and significant discoveries are made. As the Province continues to experience the effects of climate change, these direct links are added to presentation materials to ensure students can relate to the issues and understand the impacts at a local level.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few examples of the way the Conservation Corps, through the Climate Change Education Centre, is spreading the message to our youth about climate change, and their outreach efforts extend to other areas as well. For example, the centre has delivered energy efficiency and climate change presentations to various programs of the Stella Burry Community Services and the Association of New Canadians.

The provincial government is a proud sponsor of this important organization, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in addition to the funding provided through my department, approximately \$580,000 was provided last year through the Department of Advanced Education and Skills to support its many initiatives.

I ask all hon. members to join me now in applauding the Conservation Corps for their important work and wishing them all the best as they continue with the public education and outreach initiatives.

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 the advance copy of his statement and I acknowledge the good work of the Conservation Corps.

Education plays a vital role in raising environmental awareness, so I am excited to see

a Green Team discuss and pursue the limestone barrens stewardship project, particularly in my district. Programs like the Climate Change Club teach children about environmental issues from an early age, giving them a foundation to become good environmental citizens as they grow up and leading them to take actions that will reduce their impact on the environment.

As important as education is, actions are equally important, and this government has cut positions at Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve, they have cut Nature's Classroom, and they have an atrocious environmental record. When we look to this government for action on environmental issues like climate change, we see they are not taking the leadership role that they should be. When will we see the greenhouse reduction strategy on sector-by-sector emissions and a plan for action that will have real impact for this Province?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Congratulations to the Conservation Corps for their work educating students about climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

Across the Province they have worked hard for many years making people aware of how to reduce emissions. They rank second in Canada in energy audits completed per capita and had the highest proportion of rural community audits in the country; but I ask, Mr. Speaker, who is in charge of climate change in Newfoundland and Labrador? Where are government's targets for greenhouse gas emissions? This is government's hypocrisy at its worst, but I do congratulate the young folks at Conservation Corps. Bravo for their work; keep up the good work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

In November of last year the Premier instituted a discretionary hiring and spending freeze on all departments in government.

I ask the Premier: Is the spending and hiring freeze still in place?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, the member is right; last year the Premier provided some leadership to the people of the Province and announced that we were going to be putting in place a strategy to ensure that we eliminated all non-discretionary spending and we were very selective on our hiring process. We wanted to make sure that we hit our financial targets for the end of the year.

Since that time, we have had a new Budget introduced in this House. In fact, we are debating it as we speak now, Mr. Speaker. This Budget, when the House approves it, will actually be the blueprint that will help us focus our spending decisions into the year coming and, in fact, into the next five years.

Spending from here on through, Mr. Speaker, will be guided by this year's Budget; but, always, these are prudent financial decisions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I will ask the minister again: Is the discretionary spending freeze and hiring freeze in place now as part of this Budget process?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, let me answer it again. As always –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: – all of the decisions that we make as a government reflect prudent fiscal management, so we will make decisions on hiring and spending throughout this year and for the next five years and we will be guided by a blueprint, and that blueprint is the Budget.

Several weeks ago I read into this House a Budget for this year, but also read out in this House and laid out for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador a plan for the next five years, Mr. Speaker. We will be guided both in our day-to-day decisions as a government by that fiscal plan, our expenditure decisions by department and by agency will be guided by that fiscal plan, and it reflects prudent decisions and prudent spending.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, what I heard the minister say was a confirmation that the spending and hiring freeze is no longer in effect. The Budget documents his government have presented indicate a 1.7 per cent increase in spending over last year.

I ask the minister: When you are going to borrow \$1.1. billion, why did you not maintain a spending and hiring freeze?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: If the member opposite would want to check public commentary, Hansard in this House, she would recognize very clearly, as would members of this House and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the notion of having a hiring freeze and a spending freeze, that was not the terminology used in the fall, Mr. Speaker. What the Premier had said at

the time was that we were going to eliminate non-discretionary spending.

We still have a government to run. We have programs and services to provide to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to recruit new people to work in our health system. We need to recruit new people to work within our Department of Transportation and Works because they are having a summer construction program.

So, we need to carry on the business of government, providing valuable services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we will make prudent spending decisions and sometimes it will involve recruiting the kind of talent that we need to do the job, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, government has admitted that the dome over Muskrat Falls is only half completed, and plans for it to be finished have been scrapped.

I ask the minister: What is the status of the dome, and how much of taxpayers' money was spent on this structure?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, that is a repeat question, so I will try to give the same answer I gave a few weeks ago. The decision on the dome was Astaldi's to try to advance production in the building of Muskrat Falls. They built half the dome and then they decided to not build the other half, and pick up in other ways in terms of productivity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: So that was the decision, Mr. Speaker, but as I said at that time there are no additional costs to taxpayers. That is a cost to Astaldi. So, there is no additional cost. They have built half to use for half the powerhouse.

The other work is going to be done the spring and the summer in hopes of adding additional batch plants to pour more cement.

So that is their approach, Mr. Speaker, but no additional cost to the project and no additional cost to ratepayers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, government has decided not to finish the dome construction and will leave units three and four uncovered. They say it will not affect the path to the first power in 2017.

So I ask the minister: If the dome is not needed, and with such oversight as this government claims, why was it approved as a necessity for construction and ensured no delays?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Natural Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, Muskrat Falls is one of the biggest projects, I guess, most important projects, we have ever done in our history. The decisions to build Muskrat Falls are well documented, very public. Also, which is very well known, is that Nalcor is building the project, and they have project managers hired and a team through Astaldi and so on.

So the decision not to finish the dome was not a government decision, Mr. Speaker. Nalcor made the decision as project manager in the best interests of the project. Our focus, Nalcor's focus, as directed, is to build the project, try to keep it on time, and try to keep it on budget in the best interests of the ratepayers of the Province.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, it is our environment that will be further damaged because of mismanagement of this government. It has been stated in this House on many occasions that waste management is on schedule.

I ask the minister: How can such an important issue be pushed down the road another four years with continuous damage to our environment?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing being pushed down the road by this government. We were the government that initiated the waste management strategy. The prior Administration brought it in with no detail, no money, and nothing engaged in that strategy. It was us who brought it in, in 2007, outlining clearly what we needed to do in this Province. We have a modern waste management strategy.

We built on that to date. We have spent \$161 million in infrastructure in various parts of the Province, working with the community in building a state-of-the-art infrastructure project. Over the next number of years, to 2020, we will spend an extra \$61 million again in infrastructure to complete the facilities, those depots we need around the Province for waste management. From a composting point of view, we recognize due to increased costs and our financial situation, we will push that out for another five years to 2025.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: We will continue to work collectively on a waste management strategy, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I say to the minister, that is little comfort to a lot of towns that are paying a lot higher costs now, dumping fees, and a lot more dumping sites being established all over, illegal dumping sites – a lot less comfort.

We hear from this government how important the environment is. We see major increases in dumping fees, transfer of sites being delayed again, and illegal dumping increasing.

I ask the minister: With continuous delays, broken commitments, and false expectations, how can the people of the Province have faith in your waste management strategies?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, the faith in our strategy is the demonstrated work we have done since 2007, quite clearly, throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. As I said, it is a \$161 million investment, \$60 million more that will be invested between now and 2020. We have built infrastructure in all regions of the Province to continue to build on the waste management strategy.

As I said, we were the government that identified the waste management strategy, the details around it, and the dollars from the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador that we would do to build that strategy. We are committed to it.

His reference in regard to transfer stations being delayed is incorrect. A tender will be closed the end of this month. There will be \$30 million for six transfer stations for the West Coast that will be built and hopefully ready within the next twelve months. So we are moving forward with a waste management strategy, and we will see it completed in the years to come, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, the Agreement on Internal Trade helps ensure movement of people, goods, services, and investment within Canada, but the provincial government has withdrawn from ongoing negotiations on this agreement. The minister says even though they are not at the negotiating table, they are in constant communications with people at the table.

I ask the minister: Who are you in constant communications with, and who is representing the Province's interests at these negotiations?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question. For the benefit of the member, the director of trade agreements for our department, Jeff Loder, represents us at the bureaucratic level. I represent the Province, as the minister, at ministerial meetings, which we are participating in.

The member's question is a little dated. We have meetings coming up in early June, which I will be participating in, and my director will be participating in fully.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, all our provincial economic indicators are pointing in the wrong direction. Our economy is contracting, but with almost 78 per cent of our economy dependent on international trade alone, this government has decided to withdraw from all trade negotiations.

I ask the minister: If our Province is not at the negotiating table, who is representing us and the Province's interests on these important economic issues?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, the member did not listen to the answer I provided. We are at the table. I just said that a few moments ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: I am sitting at the table and our director of trade policy sits at the table. To be clear, we have never reneged on our right to sit at any table where we had provincial jurisdiction to negotiate on behalf of the people of the Province we represent.

What we have said, Mr. Speaker, in light of the failure of the federal government to live up to their agreement with us on the fisheries fund through the CETA dispute, is that we will no longer provide the federal government with the opportunity to negotiate away any rights that we own as a Province.

So to be clear, we have never said we will not negotiate as a Province, but we will not give the right to the federal government to negotiate on our behalf until such a time as they honour the CETA agreement and the fisheries fund deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government recently released a tender for several million dollars' worth of roadwork on the Trans-Canada Highway. The problem is it calls for a new polymer mixture. This new mixture is not readily available to contractors as it is not supplied by the main suppliers in this Province.

Not only has the government not put out early tenders as they promised, Mr. Speaker, now they

put out a late tender without consulting with local industry. There was no prior notice provided to the industry and no way for the industry to prepare for the use of this new asphalt.

Why would the minister call for tenders without proper consultation with industry stakeholders to ensure they are prepared for such a huge change?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to make it clear to my hon. colleague across the floor; we have a great working relationship with the industry, Mr. Speaker. Only this morning I spoke to their executive members and we had a dialogue around how we move forward on this project and many other projects. I will be meeting with their executive and a number of the proponents involved in this industry on Friday morning.

Prior to that, on Friday when there seemed to be some issues around the availability of some of the particular contractors to get 2,000 tons of liquid asphalt, I extended the contract until June 2, so we could have that dialogue. We could have that continuous dialogue going on.

I might note that in 2013 we called for a tender that had 900 tons of liquid asphalt. This one calls for 2,000, an increase, Mr. Speaker, of –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, he had a meeting because the industry is upset.

The closing date for the tender was extended because the industry was caught off guard. The asphalt that he has talked about just now, Mr.

Speaker, is different asphalt than the asphalt they used last year. If the industry was given enough notice and was properly prepared to use this new asphalt, they would probably support it and you would not have an industry that is upset and frustrated today.

Will the minister commit to changing the specifications to use the traditional asphalt that was used last year and every other year for this particular year's roadwork and allow the industry time to adjust to the changes that he proposed in the recent tender?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to make it clear, the changes in using liquid asphalt is not something new. We have been doing it when we did work on the Outer Ring Road two years ago around the rutting. It is a better quality of asphalt, Mr. Speaker, to ensure safety on our highways, particularly in high traffic areas. That is what this Administration is all about and it is what my department and the 1,700 staff are all about, ensuring safety on the roads.

We are working with the industry, Mr. Speaker. Last year we did contracts with 10,000 tons of liquid asphalt in Labrador. We are going to look at doing 2,000 tons here. If it is a problem for the industry –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – we will have those discussions. We will find a solution that works for everything, but I want to make it clear, safety on our highways, particularly high traffic areas, is our most important option here, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, hunting and trapping is a way of life in this Province. Young people are best enabled to learn these skills at a younger age and being mentored by adult family members, yet government regulations deter young people from actively participating as we have the highest age restrictions for hunters in the country.

I ask the minister: What is government doing to address these age restrictions and allow more youth to participate in hunting?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, growing up in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, when I turned sixteen the first thing my father did, he bought me my first gun. I did the same thing for my son. So I hear what the member opposite has to say. I have been in consultations with various industry groups.

We are talking about the possibility of moving forward on this, Mr. Speaker, but we are gathering information. We need to do more consultations. We need stakeholders out there to come out and talk about this. It is a bit of a gap right now from where we are. We are open to talking about this and we are looking at it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: It certainly sounds like lack of action, Mr. Speaker.

Firearm safety and hunter education courses start at age fourteen, but big game hunting is restricted until eighteen. In other provinces, young people can hunt with adult family members starting at twelve for small game and fourteen for big game. Resident hunters are taking their youth to other provinces and non-resident hunters are not bringing their youth here for hunting trips to the Province.

I ask the minister: Will you listen to hunting groups in the Province and lower the hunting age limits to be in line with the rest of the country?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we have great programs in this Province to help young hunters learn the skills of their forefathers. This week coming up, the rod and gun clubs here in St. John's and in Deer Lake are going to be participating in youth shooting competitions and skills competitions.

We are aware of the differences of what is happening in other jurisdictions. Mr. Speaker, we are having a hard look at that. Coming from my background, it is a keen interest for me. I have communicated this to industry stakeholders, outfitters, and as well as other industry groups, outdoors organizations.

Mr. Speaker, we are having a very serious look at this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, CBC is reporting yet another case where a family has been shortchanged by government's botched Inclusion Strategy. When he was asked to comment, the Acting Minister of Education said he was pleased to see that parents were making up for the shortcomings of the Inclusion Strategy by paying for a private tutor for their child.

I ask the acting minister: If everything is working so well with your Inclusion Strategy, why did the NLTA have to force your department to create a joint committee to review it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, several years ago our government adopted the Inclusive Education Initiative where we would deliver to our children in our school system special services under the lens of an inclusive approach. We are doing that. We are engaged with stakeholders.

I think we have had tremendous success, but I would be the first to say, as minister, there are challenges in the system. There are always going to be challenges. What we do need, though, is to recognize that collectively we all have a responsibility.

In reference to my CBC interview, I am always pleased to see parents engaged with their kids in education because I believe with the work of parents, with supporting their kids, along with the stakeholders we have, we are going to have the best possible education system we can have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is, government forced its own idea of inclusion onto our schools several years ago. It lacked funding, it lacked student supports, and it lacked a vision for student success.

After years of public outcry about that, I do not know where the acting minister has been he has not heard about it, but the NLTA finally forced the government to form a joint committee to review the inadequate implementation of inclusive education in this Province.

I ask the acting minister now: Will you provide an update, table an update, here in the House of Assembly on this inclusive education review that has been going on since last September, I understand?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, we believe there is wide support for inclusive education. We believe that as a society we all have a

responsibility to recognize those with exceptionalities, those with disabilities, and give them the same chance as everybody else. That is what inclusive education is about, Mr. Speaker.

What the member is suggesting here is that we do away with inclusive education and we go back to segregation, because that is the difference in the two.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: We either bring them in the classroom and support them and give them the supports they need, which is what we are doing to work with parents and to work with our stakeholders, or we stick them out into a classroom like we used to, because that is what the member is suggesting. Stick them out in a classroom like they used to.

We are not going to support it, Mr. Speaker. We are going to support the kids and do all we can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, since the Budget, I have asked the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills several questions related to the future of the Safety and Emergency Response Training Centre in Stephenville. Recently, I met with employees at the search centre who report that contractual staff have been told their contracts will not be renewed, and other staff there are concerned about the long-term viability of the centre.

I ask the minister: What actions has he taken to ensure the long-term viability of this centre?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will point out, the Member for Port au Port is having discussions with me around the centre as well, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to inform the member that I have spoken to people and had staff discuss with people at the Marine Institute around this, and I can assure the member the facility is not in danger of closing.

Mr. Speaker, they do as do other institutions, you review, you revamp, and you reorganize, making it more effective. In this case, that is what the Marine Institute is doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the contract training done at the search centre in Stephenville has been negatively impacted by the short-term downturn in the natural resource sector as companies try to contain costs.

I ask the minister: Is he concerned that making drastic changes to the search centre at this point based on short-term issues might lead to the loss of highly skilled instructors who would be hard to replace in the future? That would compromise the centre's ability to respond to future opportunities. Is he concerned about losing the staff?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, what I am concerned about is we have a facility that is current, meets the need of industry, and continues ongoing dialogue with industry, revamping their education program so that the facility becomes the strongest that it possibly can. I have no doubt that the Marine Institute has been a proven leader in their field, and they will do the same here, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, the Honour 100 Initiative commemorates the sacrifices of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who served in World War I. A check of the Honour 100 website leaves a curious impression. A number of events are planned for 2014 but still nothing listed for 2015.

I ask the minister: Can he update us on the events planned for this year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have not seen the website myself recently, so I will certainly endeavour to have staff to update the website for the member for future Question Periods so he will be armed with a list of events that we are planning on pursuing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: As a part of the 100 initiative, government launched a program valued at \$600,000 for community heritage projects focused on World War I. The deadline to make application for these grants was in February of this year.

Since we have heard nothing from the government about the program, I ask the minister: How many community groups have applied for this funding, and what sorts of projects have been funded?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the member once again raising the issue. As I have said a number of times in the House, it is a very important investment that this

government has made because we recognize the value of engaging our citizens in remembering the history of our Province. I think I have mentioned to the member before that we are actually taking a huge delegation of youth this year from right across the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to Beaumont Hamel as part of that particular trip.

The projects that the member speaks to, I do not have the detail in front of me. Unlike other governments, this government is not into operational issues like that. We have officials who deal with those things. Once projects are selected for approval, then I become aware of a number of applications and those who are successful. When that occurs, I suspect over the coming weeks, we will certainly make members aware and make members of the public aware.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This evening there will be a major rally in Labrador City to support the 150 workers losing their jobs at IOC. In February the Premier visited Labrador West and would not meet with the steelworkers' union that represents the workers.

I ask the Premier why he did not bother to meet with Steelworkers Local 5795.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that the circumstances and matters that are occurring in Labrador West, I consider them to be very serious. It has significant impact on not only the company, but its employees, a large number of employees, and also the community itself. We have already seen the challenges that exist in the iron ore industry, Mr. Speaker, and we are seeing what is taking place now and watching what is taking place now between the company and its members.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Labrador West earlier this year, and I did engage in conversations with stakeholders in Labrador West. The union representative did not indicate a desire to meet until very late in trip and I could not accommodate that at that point in time. My officials have been engaged with representatives of employees and, as well, a mediator has been assigned and has been making progress in the last number of months. We hope that both sides can continue to make progress together.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, it sounds like he has no intention of meeting with them, which is disgraceful. There are currently 2,400 outstanding grievances from the union that IOC is ignoring – 2,400 – thereby creating a toxic work environment.

I ask the Premier why he has not answered the steel workers' request for an industrial inquiry to investigate IOC's poor labour relations.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An industrial inquiry is an option that is being considered, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you I have been in discussions as recent as coming before the House this afternoon with the MHA, the Member for Labrador West, who is in Labrador West today instead of being here in the House. He continues to have ongoing discussions with both stakeholders, representatives of employees and also with the company. He is on the ground doing the work in his own district, where he should.

Mr. Speaker, we assigned a mediator from the Labour Relations Agency. From an arm's length point of view, this is a matter directly between the employees and the employer. We have a mediator. Together they are making progress. They are meeting more regularly now

than they ever have before. We are hoping that they are going to be able to continue that, but we are looking forward to a further update on that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just returned from a press conference where thirteen eminent groups, including Research Exchange Groups at MUN, the Social Justice Co-op of Newfoundland and Labrador, Council of Canadians, and the Port au Port Bay Fishery Committee raised concerns that government's fracking panel is not representative. There are no women, no Aboriginal people, no one from the West Coast, and no medical and health researchers and specialists on it. They are very concerned about the lack of true consultation.

I ask the minister: Will he agree to meet with these concerned groups to hear the very important and valid concerns that they have raised?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, there is a process ongoing where an independent panel has been appointed – highly regarded people who we feel are independent of the fracking issue, but obviously bringing experience and knowledge.

I understand the fact that you cannot have a panel with every aspect represented, but what you can have, Mr. Speaker, is a panel that provides a process for everyone – every one of these groups, everybody who has an opinion to make sure they share that, share their research, and share their facts with the panel. The panel will do their due diligence with that work and provide a report back to government.

We will make it public. Eventually, Mr. Speaker, government will make a decision with respect to fracking.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that this panel is not representative of the Province and it does not include –

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member has time for a quick question.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will he instruct the reconstituted panel to include a health impact assessment of fracking for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources has time for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the panel was put in place because of the current concern for the health and safety of people of the Province. That has been clear. It has been clear to the panel. As I have said before, it is independent. As minister, I am not going to intervene with the work of the panel. The decision on fracking has not been made. This government has not decided we are going to frack or not frack.

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: In accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meetings held on February 24 and March 5, 2015.

Also, pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the Public Tender Act, I hereby table a report of Public Tender Act exceptions for the month of March 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 Port au Port.

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move, seconded by the hon. Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, the following private member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House condemns and seeks the immediate reversal of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans decision to divide the 172.8 ton increase in the halibut quota equally among eight groups, instead of respecting this Province's traditional share of 29.1 per cent – a decision that will reduce the additional share available to Newfoundland and Labrador from fifty tons to about twenty-one tons.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that the motion just put forward by the hon. member will be the private member's motion debated this coming Wednesday.

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

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS 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 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 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 had the privilege over in Whitbourne on Thursday night to attend a SOPAC meeting. I have to say that group of people are wonderful people to bring the issue of moose accidents to the forefront. I would just like to say that the past president, they were all very good – and we have a new president of that organization, Mr. Brent Cole, and I would like to congratulate him.

The SOPAC group are not asking for anything out of the way here. We went with the moose detectors. They did not seem to work. That cost us \$1.4 million – from what I can understand; anyway, it did not work. There is a lot of information out there within the department where those moose actually come out to. If the government would even consider making an approach to it or making a start at it to identify the areas where the moose do a lot of crossing, to make a start on some fencing.

These people are not asking you to go right across Newfoundland and Labrador with fencing; these people are asking you to look at the circumstance of where the accidents actually take place and to make a start on it, Mr. Speaker. So if you took it and you made a process on it and you made a start on it, then we can continue on each year. These people are not asking for anything – and at all points in time, they have the best interest of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador at hand. So, that is what these people are looking for, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the community of Northern Bay is a significant tourist attraction in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde; and

WHEREAS the site of a commercial building was destroyed by fire several years ago; and

WHEREAS the remains of this fire still exist along Route 70 in Northern Bay;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure the necessary cleanup occurs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROCKER: As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to stand this afternoon on behalf the people of the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde. A number of years ago a fire destroyed a commercial building

located directly across from the entrance to Northern Bay Sands. For those in the House who do not know, Northern Bay Sands is probably one of the largest tourism attractions in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde, with tens of thousands of visitors every summer.

This past Saturday, I had the opportunity to spend most of the day on the North Shore involved in a community cleanup organized by Stella Johnson from Northern Bay. While we were there we took some time to look at the site of the former commercial building. Just last week, I had the opportunity to speak to the minister about this building and he assured me he would have his officials go and take a serious look at it.

This fire happened, I think, it was three years ago and the remnants of the fire still stay there today. It has even gotten to a situation where what is starting to happen now is people are using it for a waste disposal site. They are bringing in other garbage and leaving it on the site of this former commercial building.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon the government and I ask the minister to please, as soon as possible, go to Northern Bay, look at this situation, and take the necessary steps that are required to clean this up. Not only is it an eyesore, it is a safety concern with large metal objects, sharp objects, and so forth. Also, there are environmental issues. It is surrounded by running water.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister to immediately have a look at this facility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: – and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation.

MS DEMPSTER: – to immediately allocate resources to Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay that allows for permanent resurfacing of the highway.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This is not a new petition, and the problems still persist. I was thinking as I drove over it again this past weekend and I am zigzagging out around and I am jamming the brake, very dangerous, big jagged potholes, many, many times I have talked about the people who have to drive over this pavement that is almost forty years old, that is extremely dilapidated, that to my knowledge is not even on the radar yet to be resurfaced.

I have talked about the school children who have to be bused over this, the ambulance people; but, as I was standing to speak, I thought of something else. They are not residents, but they are very important people in our Province; their

Honours are coming to the district and I am going to be hosting them in the district for several events this weekend. On Thursday and on Friday the Lieutenant Governor and his wife are going to drive on this road, Mr. Speaker. It really concerns me for their safety. They are driving over a road they are not used to. It is absolutely atrocious.

Maybe if I start on Monday, maybe by Wednesday we can get another few bags or a tractor trailer load of cold patch down just for some interim life-saving measures there, Mr. Speaker. It is really is that bad; I am not exaggerating. The road is atrocious. This past week was the first time I have driven over it in weeks that I have not lost a tire.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are three projects that are ongoing right now in Labrador – the infamous eleven kilometres after the bungle from Humber Valley Paving is still not done; that is being finished. I know there is some pavement on the Goose Bay north end and there is widening and upgrading north of Lodge Bay; but this road has to be addressed, it has to be factored in, it is a danger to the travelling public, to the residents who live there. We are coming into tourist season and we are going to have people driving and towing motorhomes.

Mr. Speaker, I am fearful to say it, but it is a matter of time and lives are going to be lost on Route 510.

Thank you.

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition for brush clearing on the Manuels Access Road.

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, this is a petition that I have brought forward on several occasions. As I said, this is the second busiest highway in the Province, some 20,000 to 30,000 vehicles a day. We have been looking for brush clearing here for some time. Our last response from the Minister of Transportation and Works is that yes, in the next batch of tenders, there may be brush clearing for this section of highway.

Mr. Speaker, the last batch of tenders – as I have mentioned here before, there we nine projects – all nine went to government districts.

I will just give you an example. When you leave the Manuels Arterial Road and take Pitts Memorial Drive down towards St. John's, we have the District of Kilbride on our right, the District of Paradise on our left, and the first thing we see is that brush is cleared from the median going down to the highway. Then brush is cleared to prevent moose coming off the Glencrest development. Then as we go further towards town, brush is cleared to keep moose from coming out of the backyards of Southlands. We turn around and come back, we pass Admiralty Woods and brush clearing is done on the backyards of Admiralty Woods to keep the moose from coming out of the backyards of those houses.

Mr. Speaker, as we get up into Ruth Avenue, the brush is cleared in the median in Ruth Avenue, to keep the moose from coming off the parking lot of Bigs – they hang out there at Bigs all the time. As we come further towards Conception Bay South –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: – brush is cleared to keep moose from coming out of Donovans Industrial Park. It is time for us to get some brush clearing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There are many private conversations going on. The Speaker is having trouble hearing the person recognized to speak. I would ask again for all members for their co-operation, please.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South, to continue.

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, we are taking a trip from downtown and working our way back towards Conception Bay South, and following where the brush has been cut. The last area I mentioned was Donovans Industrial Park, Mr. Speaker. With all the moose coming out of Donovans Industrial Park it is a danger coming along the highway, and I ask that government give us the same –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his speaking time has expired.

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 humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the Strait of Belle Isle is a very important transportation link between Labrador and the Island of Newfoundland; and

WHEREAS both commercial and residential traffic is continuously increasing because of the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway, and increased developments in Labrador; and

WHEREAS the existing ferry service can no longer effectively handle the traffic; and

WHEREAS there have been many interruptions in the ferry service, especially during the 2014 winter season;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to complete a comprehensive feasibility study for a fixed link across the Strait of Belle Isle that would include a geological assessment and a full cost analysis.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, any society that has ever developed and thrived has been developed on advanced transportation links. If we look at what is happening and what Quebec is doing, they are investing in Route 138. There are hundreds of millions of dollars in the Plan Nord under a Liberal government in Quebec that is looking at moving transportation north. No matter what happens, transportation will flow north. So we have an opportunity to act and create a great circle route.

The petitioners here are asking for government to take on and conduct a comprehensive feasibility study to look at what the geology is like and a full cost analysis. What we had was a pre-feasibility study that is not as comprehensive in terms of information.

If we look at the opportunity that exists, we look at in St. Anthony there is international shipping.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: If you talk about being able to come in through Labrador, go across the Strait of Belle Isle in a fixed link and come down the Great Northern Peninsula, you could go to St. John's and you could end up

going out through Argientia, or you could come right down the West Coast and go through Port aux Basques and make that great circle route, how transportation can flow effectively. Just like how government is saying this is how electricity is going to flow, we have to make sure that goods and services and flow of people can also be moved in a similar way.

This is why we really do need – I have been speaking up for having Newfoundland and Labrador connected by a fixed link for quite some time. I certainly support it. Government does not know how much it is going to cost because government is not willing to even do a feasibility study; yet, it will do feasibility studies and cost analysis for a number of other projects they have put forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: So they do not have the interest, Mr. Speaker, on that side of the House to look at advancing transportation networks in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Quebec government certainly does.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SPEAKER: We are continuing debate on the Budget Speech, the amendment.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to once again speak to the Budget; a Budget that we have been dealing with here in the House now for a number of days; a Budget which causes great concern to us and to people in the Province; a Budget which this government is bringing in and has brought in and we are debating, which is making the people of the Province pay for their errors, making the people of the Province pay for the situation we are in, in this Province with regard to our fiscal situation, making the people of the Province pay for their poor planning. That is what this Budget it all about, Mr. Speaker.

The \$1 billion deficit is a deficit on the backs of the people because this government spent the last year – since 2003, this party has been in government. They have been here for something that has never happened in our Province before. They are here because they themselves took the money that has been earned by the workers of this Province, the money that has been earned in the offshore, the money that has come in, and they spent it without any planning.

That is the problem, Mr. Speaker, they spent it without any planning, no planning for the future. Knowing they are dealing with a resource that we have no control over in terms of the money it brings in, knowing the oil that comes from our offshore is something that is part of a whole global system, and they and we or nobody else has control over how much money that is going to bring in; yet, spent it since 2003. Yes, it did some wonderful things. I am not going to deny we needed a lot of work done.

We never had this money before but it still should have been spent with planning for the future, knowing that at any moment with the fluctuating prices for the price of oil, that we could be in the situation we are in. It was not a surprise to anybody else, yet they behave as if: Oh, my goodness, look at what happened. All of a sudden the price of oil dropped. Well, that is what happens to the price of oil. Yes, it will go back up again and then it will drop again.

We have a Budget they are calling *Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*. Well, I have read this Budget. I have read so much of the Budget, the Budget Speech itself. I read the Speech from the Throne, that happened before the Budget. I have read the documentation that goes with it. We have started the Estimates.

I would like to know what the promising future is that the government is talking about and I would like to know what the balanced choices are, because it seems to me the balance is against the people of the Province, Mr. Speaker. This is what really disturbs me. The balance is against the people of the Province.

I would like to talk about some of the things that are in the Budget and how I see them affecting people in this Province and how I see them affecting people in my District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, Mr. Speaker.

In one of their documents, one of the Budget papers is called Investing in Health and Wellness. The government talks about, “Recognizing the importance of ensuring there is sufficient capacity to meet a growing need for long-term care, Budget 2015 provides approximately \$700 million in long-term care and community support services, including home support and personal care homes.”

They then go on and talk about all the ways in which they are going to spend that \$700 million, but because the government has not put plans in place, because they have not done careful mapping out of the needs and put a whole program of long-term care and home care in place, their Budget is hit and miss. Let me talk about some of the misses, Mr. Speaker. They do not like to hear about the misses but the misses are there.

Let’s talk about a couple in my District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi where the man of that couple is in poor health. He himself has a bad heart condition. He underwent surgery for that heart condition and he requires home care. What happens is his wife gets ill. She goes into hospital. She goes through her treatments in hospital and she is told she can go home. She said, well, I cannot go home, I need help. I have to be taken care of. Well, you have a partner, you have a husband,. Yes, but my husband

requires home care himself and he has his come care. He cannot take care of me.

So, she sits in a bed in the hospital for two to three months trying to get this sorted out. She is being told, well, if you are not going to go home you have to go into a long-term care facility. She said, but if I can manage at home with home care, why can't I get home care? She was told, well, your husband has home care.

Mr. Speaker, that is a miss, and that is a real situation. That family did not give up. Eventually somebody used their head inside of the health care system, and eventually somebody realized let's get the home care in place. It did happen. So now both of those people are at home and they are getting the home care they need.

Mr. Speaker, why should they have to go through that kind of situation? Months of being in torture, months of being unhappy, months of feeling insecure, months of not being together as a couple. This is not acceptable. When government talks about \$700 million in long-term care and community support services, they do not think about planning.

It is the same way, Mr. Speaker, that we saw today. We had family members, people outside the House of Assembly today, and they were protesting. Why were they protesting? Because they are the parents of children who are autistic. What were their signs saying? Their signs were saying: inclusion, not exclusion. What did that mean? Those signs were getting at another example of where this government takes one step, does not do planning, does not do an analysis, and makes a mess of things.

When they started inclusion in the educational system, when they started their wonderful model of all students at all times being in a classroom together, called it inclusion, and then did not put the resources in place to make inclusion work. What one of the mothers outside today said to me: It is not inclusion, Ms Michael, it is exclusion. Because when my son acts up, when my autistic son cannot take anymore, and maybe children are teasing him or maybe he just cannot take any more in the classroom and he gets worked up, he is the one who gets sent home and

the rest stay in the classroom. So he gets excluded.

I have a constituent in my district, Mr. Speaker, whose son is autistic. He is now at home, and has been at home for months. Apparently, there are hundreds of children in this Province now who are at home because the schools they are in do not have the resources to enable those children to be in the classroom. Instead of something being done to get services for them, they are now being excluded because the schools do not have the resources to keep them in the classroom. They are being excluded now.

These children who are so-called included in the school system, in actual fact, are worse off than they ever were. Because before when they were not in the one classroom with all other students all day long, they actually had people who were working with them. Now, in order to be in the classroom – and nobody is saying they should not be there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: The parents are not saying it either. What they are saying is, where are the resources to help them be in the classroom?

As one of the parents said to me today, there are times they have to leave the classroom. It is not a matter that it is even good for them to be in that one classroom all the time. Where is the flexibility with regard to the needs of those children? I have not one, I have several people in my district who have come to me about this issue and it is getting more extreme.

This is another miss. They like to talk about the wins. I am putting out there right now the misses, the things that are not working.

Let's look at something else. I have in my district the new St. John's long-term care facility. We all know about that facility, a beautiful building. It is state of the art. There is absolutely no doubt about that, Mr. Speaker, it is state of the art.

What is happening? We have a facility there where thirty of the beds are still not open. They

have been in that building for months. Thirty of the beds are still not open. Those beds are not open because we had inadequate staffing.

Many of the people from my district are in that building, and I have the families of those people getting in touch with me. They are upset about the fact that their loved ones are in that facility – and they are really happy to have their private room and happy to share a washroom with only one person. There are all kinds of things about it that are good. It is wonderful having that building, but we have a government that once again did not do any planning. They did not plan for what the real needs were going to be in that building.

I have spoken already in this House, and I have asked questions in this House with regard to the staffing levels of the long-term care facility. We know and the government knows, and Eastern Health knows –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

There are significant conversations on both sides of the House. I ask hon. members if they could respect the speaker and either take their conversations to corners of the House or outside.

Thank you very much.

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

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

I appreciate your intervention there.

As I was saying, we have a long-term care facility that does not have enough staff in it to take care of the needs of the people, and Eastern Health is recognizing that.

It is really interesting, Mr. Speaker, they have been having over there regularly, and this is a good thing, regular meetings called family council meetings. They have the family council meeting once a month. One month it is in the east wing, and one month it is in the west wing. They have to do that of course because there are

so many people there that even to try to have one meeting covering both wings at the same time would make it difficult for people attending. So they go back and forth. One month after the other, they have these family council meetings.

At the February meeting, Mr. Speaker – and I understand this also happened at the March meeting, but at the February meeting, I have the minutes here in my hand – the families raised concerns about what was happening at the long-term care facility. They raised concerns about understaffing. They raised concerns with regard to high nursing absenteeism since the move from Hoyles Escasoni over to the new facility. They have raised concerns about continuity of care. In other words, in one night or one day even they may see one nurse on duty and the next day that nurse is not there, it is somebody different. The same way with an LPN, the same way with personal care workers, they do not have continuity.

Another issue that has been raised by them is lack of physiotherapy. Another issue raised by the family is lack of recreational programming. These are very serious concerns, Mr. Speaker. I have to say at least the minutes reflect that the staff gave the reasons for their concerns. They said your concerns are valid and the reasons they give are very disturbing. They told them the truth. They told them that, yes, we have a whole unit that is not open. We recognize this is a problem. We have concern for the families. Our recruitment team is doing extensive recruitment and we are starting to see successes, but it is a mess over there.

Here you have the families at least were not – nobody tried to deny it, they gave them the reason, but it is a sign of the lack of planning, Mr. Speaker. The same way with the continuity of – not the continuity, that too, but the one I wanted to look at, the families raised the issue of the lack of physiotherapy. They were told by the staff that there was a vacant physiotherapy position at the new site since October of 2014. It had been recruited for several times with no success and they were told that one was coming. It is solved, one is coming. Still months away, but it was coming.

The other thing that they raised, Mr. Speaker, was the lack of recreational programming. Again, nobody denied it. Everybody recognized there is a lack of recreational programming. They were told that the therapeutic recreation department has not had a full complement of employees since moving to the new home and have been down by three to four employees. Mr. Speaker, this is not good enough.

I have also had a letter from one of my constituents whose mother is in the home. What she has described, others have described to me as well. She has put it in writing, a long letter, about a seven-page long letter describing how her mother cannot get out of bed, she is alone in her room, and this daughter does go in as often as she can every day. The things that she discovers, sometimes 3:00 in the afternoon her mother still has not been seen for her personal needs; a tray laid down for her and nobody coming back to help her eat it; not having had her bath yet at 3:00 in the afternoon – not the fault of the workers, Mr. Speaker, and this is what I want to make clear; it is because there are not enough staff in the facility. That is the reason for this reality.

This woman, because of the lack of recreational facilities, she is not getting the kind of recreational outside of her room that would stimulate her, so she is very unhappy.

The things that are going on – and it is not the staff. It is the understaffing that is the issue; understaffing not just with regard to LPNs, understaffing not just with regard to nurses, but understaffing also in the specialized areas – the specialized areas, as I just named, physiotherapy and recreational programming, just to name two. The minutes of the meeting, the family says, that the manager of the therapeutic recreation department is currently conducting a review of service delivery to the facility. Group exercise is a program on units presently, so they do get to have fun and fitness. It is called group exercise.

No individual attention to the needs, no individual attention to somebody, for example, who needs help getting out of bed. You have people who are in bed and if they were able to be out around, maybe in a wheelchair, they would be happy to do it, but not enough of them are getting the opportunities to do that.

Mr. Speaker, this is the legacy of this government so far. Having been in power for twelve years, their legacy is a legacy of half measures, not doing long-term planning, not recognizing that you have to have – a strategy has many phases to it and pieces fit together. You just cannot put a piece in here, a piece over there, and a piece somewhere else. You cannot say we have a program to help families who want to take care of their own person who needs long-term care and we will pay them, we will give them some money, and, on the other hand, tell a person whose husband has home care and she is in hospital you can go on home because your husband has home care. She required home care herself.

They are not putting all the pieces together. They do not do planning. They do not look at the long term. They do not put in place all the pieces that are needed.

Inclusion – we have heard about inclusion in school. Oh, that sounds like a great idea, but who bothered to look at the fact what did that mean. What did it mean in terms of resourcing? What did it mean in terms of the needs, not just of the children who had special needs, but what did it mean for the needs of the children who are in the classroom, who want to be there with their fellow students who have special needs, but also they too need to learn? So what does it mean? What does inclusion really mean?

What we demand of this government is some real planning, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the hon. member her time has expired.

MS MICHAEL: Yes, my time is up.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased this afternoon to take my second opportunity to speak to *Budget 2015: Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*. Mr. Speaker, I am first going to start by talking a little bit about my district and move into my critic's role before I look at some of the information the government has provided us when it comes to Budget 2015.

It is always a pleasure to stand here and represent the people from Trinity – Bay de Verde. A district which I have had the privilege to represent just since November, but it is indeed a pleasure. Mr. Speaker, always, in Trinity – Bay de Verde, the first thing that comes to mind when you speak is the fishery. It is by far the most important industry in our district, with three plants. One in Winterton, one in Old Perlican, and one in Bay de Verde doing shellfish, and another plant in Old Perlican involved in the groundfish industry. The groundfish industry is one that we need to be prepared for. As the groundfish stocks replenish, we have to ensure that we are ready for that stock and ready to market that stock.

I hear from the critic on our side for Fisheries all the time talking about the failure of the government. It has been a constant failure of this government to market and to plan. We have not planned for the return of the cod fish. We are going to pay for that when it does return in our waters.

The other industry that is developing in Trinity – Bay de Verde is tourism. I can remember back maybe ten to fifteen years ago where it would be very hard at that point to find accommodations in Trinity – Bay de Verde. Mr. Speaker, we have some world-class facilities, world-class accommodations now in that district and some amazing infrastructure and tourism attractions.

I spoke to a petition earlier this afternoon that had to deal with one of those locations, and I will just go back to it for a minute. It is about the abandoned building in Northern Bay that burned down about four years ago, and it is directly across from the entrance to Northern Bay Sands. I am pretty sure everybody in this House, if they have not visited Northern Bay Sands, they are familiar with Northern Bay

Sands. I do call upon the government again and the Minister of Environment to ensure that this cleanup takes place sooner rather than later.

We also have Salmon Cove Sands in our district. That is probably the two most prominent beaches. We have Baccalieu Island, we have Bay de Verde heritage house, Old Perlican heritage house. Mr. Speaker, I am going to miss somebody if I start naming things.

We also have Pitcher's Pond golf course in Whiteway, which is a lovely nine-hole course. Anybody who has played it will quickly understand that Pitcher's Pond is probably one of the hardest nine-hole golf courses you will find anywhere. I see the member –

MR. K. PARSONS: I played it twice last weekend.

MR. CROCKER: The Member for Cape St. Francis played it twice last weekend. So thank you for spending some of your money in Trinity – Bay de Verde, Sir. It is probably one of the hardest nine-hole golf courses you will find anywhere. There is no forgiveness, to anybody who understands golf.

Mr. Speaker, that is a little bit about the tourism industry in Trinity – Bay de Verde, but there is one thing that comes out of Budget 2015 when it comes to tourism and Trinity – Bay de Verde that is a little concerning. Mr. Speaker, 2016 will mark the 150 anniversary of the successful landing of the transatlantic cable in Heart's Content. In last year's Budget, the government did allocate some money for some improvements to the museum. Even today, those improvements to the museum are taking place and I thank the government for that, and the people involved in the 150 celebrations in Heart's Content would certainly thank the government as well.

The troubling thing coming out of Budget 2015-2016, Mr. Speaker, is there is no special line allocation for the celebration of the 150 anniversary of the landing of the transatlantic cable. Again, I met with this group on Friday in Heart's Content to talk about the planning and where the planning had come thus far. They are concerned not seeing a budget line item on funding for the celebrations in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the government and I urge the minister to ensure this significant anniversary next spring or next summer – actually I think July 27 is the day when a lot of the activities are going to take place, that the government become an active partner in this and ensure the proper funding for the celebration of the 150 anniversary of the successful landing of the transatlantic cable takes place.

Mr. Speaker, that is a little bit on the district. I will come back to the district again when I get my next opportunity to speak to Budget 2015. I am just going to take a minute now and go into my critic role. I am the critic responsible for business and rural development in the Province. We have had some exchanges here in the House with the minister over the past few months about some of the activities around the Business Investment Corporation.

The minister likes to point out the history of the loans. He stood in the House, I guess two weeks ago, and said how 97 per cent of the loans the department had written off were loans from previous Liberal Administrations. The minister did not really look at those numbers too closely because he would have found that the number is not 97 per cent, it is substantially lower.

When you talk about the loans of previous Administrations, you are talking about the significance of – the Fisheries Loan Board, Mr. Speaker. The vast majority of the loans that have been written off over the last ten years by this government were Fisheries Loan Board loans that date back as far as 1968. We look at comments made here of loans from past Administrations, but I was not even born when some of these loans were lent.

Mr. Speaker, when we look back at that, some of the information is not totally clear to the people at home. Some clearer information, we go back to the 2013-2014 annual report of the Business Investment Corporation. The financial statements for the Business Investment Corporation show loans and equity in 2013-2014 of \$36.3 million and a decline in value of \$26 million. That is a decline of 73 per cent.

It makes you wonder sometimes, Mr. Speaker, as somebody who comes from a small business background what government is doing in some

cases when it comes to protecting taxpayers' money. On March 31, 227 of the loans from the Business Investment Corporation – of a portfolio I think somewhere in the 550 loan portfolio – were past due by ninety days.

We have to look no further than other jurisdictions in the country. If we look at Nova Scotia and their Department of Business and Rural Development as an example of how they handle taxpayers' money when lending it for business development. In Nova Scotia, it is an arm's-length organization very similar to what we have here in the Province in our Research and Development Corporation that lends money to businesses.

One thing you will not find at an announcement or a ribbon cutting in Nova Scotia when it comes to taxpayers' money, from the Department of Business, is a Cabinet minister. In Nova Scotia, the government removes themselves from business investment. It is no different than we do somewhat with our Research and Development Corporation, but in Nova Scotia, the government removes themselves from the day to day lending.

I think as we go forward, Mr. Speaker, it is something we should look at as a Province when it comes to lending to small business. I absolutely support government playing a role in business and lending to businesses. There are many, many success stories from this Administration, and from Administrations past, of businesses that have been successful with the help of government. I certainly support government's role in helping with business development.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move away from there again a little bit now and talk about government's plans – and hopefully I will have enough time to get into the eight pillars of this year's Budget.

First, I am going to look, Mr. Speaker, back three-and-a-half years ago at a blueprint from this government in the 2011 election campaign. I will just read some of the stuff I found in there that I thought was interesting to point out to the people and just remind them of some of the promises the government made just three-and-a-half-short years ago.

They start off on page 3 talking about a reasonable approach to debt management. Well, they have managed to get the debt from twelve years ago at \$9 billion to what will be, if you look at the pillars of the new five-year plan, to over \$14.7 billion in five years' time. So, they have managed – one thing they have done on debt management is they have managed to increase it.

Page 4, Population Growth Strategy. I hear the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair get up day after day and talk about the Population Growth Strategy, or lack thereof. That strategy has been a strategy that has seen our population decline, Mr. Speaker, since we had this last blueprint.

They brag about, on page 5, the Residential Energy Tax Rebate. So three-and-a-half years ago they took some time to talk about it, but, obviously, in Budget 2015 the residential tax rebate was eliminated.

Focusing on Teachers – well, they focused on 77.5 teaching units this year and here in the House last week were not able to give us a clear answer on how many actual teachers will not have a job to return to in September, so there is a focus on teachers.

Post-secondary, tuition freeze: Another commitment that the government has always stood on its feet and talked wonderfully about tuition freezes year after year after year, but this year the minister stood on his feet and said well, hold on, we are hands off on the tuition freeze; that is a decision for Memorial. In the 2011 Blue Book it was something we could certainly talk about, but now it is a decision for Memorial.

Student Housing: The 2011 Blueprint talks about student housing. One of the increases in this Budget which concerns me as an MHA that represents rural Newfoundland is increase to housing and the cost of student housing, because it is the students from my district and from the vast majority of the districts of members on this side of the House who avail of student housing. So again, it is the rural student who is going to pay for this increase in housing cost.

Then there is another interesting section, section nine in the Blue Book, it is called Labrador.

They talk about the Trans-Labrador Highway, a highway that has pretty much gone nowhere since the Humber Valley Paving debacle. We got set back and as I think the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair today had a petition talking about the deplorable conditions of the road – and we hear it day in and day out. As a link this past winter, the ferry was stuck for days and days on end that the people of Labrador could not get across or we could not get back over and the movement of goods is severely hindered.

It is interesting while I am on Labrador for a second, I will just go off a little bit from the blueprint. Back in the early winter, I had the opportunity to spend the day at the Northern Expo here in St. John's and there were interesting conversations with small business owners from the coast of Labrador talking about the lack of purchasing or local support that they were receiving from Muskrat Falls, the development. We are not buying local when it comes to Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker. We have wholesalers here in the Province who were shipping, I think up until that point in February it was nine pallets for this year in. In one day alone, they counted fifty tractor trailer loads coming in from the Quebec side.

The government talks about a moose management strategy. It is an interesting strategy. In two petitions here in the House of Assembly this afternoon it talked about a moose management or a lack thereof strategy. The Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace referenced so the SOPAC AGM he attended last week. Like he said this afternoon, I think to quote his number it was \$1.4 million they spent on the monitoring system.

Everybody in this Legislature had some opportunity in the past five or six years to drive in over the highway and look at the flashing light signs. The ironic thing is on the bottom there was out of order. They were out of order. The out of order signs actually became permanent. They were permanent. There was a permanent out of order sign. Usually out of order is just like a sticker. These –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: Yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: They are still working out in Gander (inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: On the West Coast they are still – yes. So it was a permanent out of order sign. It was quite interesting.

The government talks about its ferry strategy. We see where a ferry strategy for Labrador has gone, Mr. Speaker. It has gone back to the drawing board.

This is another interesting one. This one, Mr. Speaker, really hits home for me in my district and I know other rural districts. Digital and Cellular Telephone Services: “We will work with service providers to develop a plan to expand digital and cellular telephone access to more regions of the province.” That was in 2011 that statement was made.

We looked at an ATIPP request back again, I think in March, and it showed that government has not been talking to anybody when it comes to cellphones. They say it is a federal responsibility. We agree. We recognize the fact this is a federal responsibility, but it is a provincial responsibility for government to advocate on behalf of the people. We should be at the table telling the federal government that we need a strategy and we need adequate cellphone coverage in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, they also go back in 2011 and talk about the need for re-establishing a fisheries loan board. There has been no action. That is gone, and I do not profess to know as much as the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace when it comes to the fisheries, but the FTNOP I believe has been somewhat of a dismal failure to say the least.

I spoke earlier on about tourism and the value of tourism in my district and throughout the Province. One of the things they talked about three-and-a-half years ago in tourism is signage and a strategy for uniformity in signage. I believe three years ago, they went out and removed a lot of signs and there was a strategy. In three years’ time, we were going to have finger boards. I think that has failed.

The next one – and I am getting towards the end of the blueprint.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where is all of this coming from?

MR. CROCKER: This is the Tory blueprint from 2011.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: These are not my notes.

Page 56, Respecting Our Seniors – this is a very interesting one. I sat in this House three weeks ago, I think, when the Member for Conception Bay South entered a private member’s resolution on one Wednesday calling for the establishment of a seniors’ advocate.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) supported that.

MR. CROCKER: No, unfortunately they never. One member from the government actually got up and said seniors had enough.

MR. REID: (Inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: Exactly, I say to the Member for St. George’s.

Just last week, after so much pressure coming from our side of the House and from the Member for Burgeo – La Poile talking about it, government has at least now reinstated that a senior, not only a senior, but people in our Province can actually not only get a half a set of dentures now. So after pressure from the Member for Burgeo – La Poile in Estimates and in other places –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: – the respect for our seniors came back a little bit. So now seniors who require dentures can at least get a full set.

Mr. Speaker, another thing they talk about is Care At Home. I think that was the family caregiver program. The family caregiver program has been non-existence from what I have heard. I have not heard tell of anybody getting up and championing the family caregiver program in any recent time.

Policing and corrections, Her Majesty's Penitentiary – well, we know what happened to Her Majesty's Penitentiary and we know what happened to the courthouse announcement. The government went late last fall and announced a new courthouse for downtown. No doubt we need one, but there was never anything done with it. There was never a plan. It was an announcement. It was never a plan to replace the courthouse; it was an announcement. How many announcements have we had to replace Her Majesty's Penitentiary? It is just announcement, after announcement, after announcement.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Waterford.

MR. CROCKER: The Waterford Hospital, the same thing. The Corner Brook hospital – we all know \$40 million for the Corner Brook hospital to date, with \$9 million this year for the Corner Brook hospital. Well, I can assure you that will not go very far.

Mr. Speaker, my time is running out and I wish I had some more – if someone could give me some leave – because I only got through the Blue Book and I wanted to go in and talk about some points of what the Liberal Party has said we would do as a government, so I will save that for my next speech.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I do each and every time I stand on my feet in this House, I would like to say again thank you very much to the people of the great District of Lake Melville. From Sheshatshiu in North West River up to Goose Bay into Mud Lake and into Churchill Falls, the people have always been there to stand by me. It is an honour and a privilege to represent them in this House and in the daily activities of government, and it is an honour and a privilege to get into the district each and every time that I possibly can.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to start my commentary today again with just a little of discussion about the district itself and some of the things that have been happening. Last weekend – not this weekend past but the weekend before that – I was in the great community of Churchill Falls at Eric G. Lambert High School and we had the high school graduation there. Nobody puts off an intimate affair like the people in Churchill Falls. I get to say that, Mr. Speaker. It is a company town. What they have is a very small number of grads and everybody takes part, but they had a wonderful ceremony, a wonderful plan for the safe grad. Everybody participated there.

I just want to say for my fourth grad in a row at Churchill Falls, it was a wonderful, wonderful experience put off with all the class and all the love and support for those students that you would expect from the people of Churchill Falls.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say one other note about that graduation ceremony in Churchill Falls, Mark Critch – the famous comedian, born Newfoundland and Labrador – responded to a student's request to be the guest speaker at the Churchill Falls graduation. You can imagine that now in very isolated central Labrador you have Mark Critch coming in to address the dozen or so graduates. It was wonderful, Mr. Speaker. Even then in that speech by Mr. Mark Critch he talked about our tourism ads, the Davis government, and a few of the things that we are doing. I also got roasted a little, which was my pleasure to be done by such a famous Newfoundlander and Labradorian as well.

To the kids of Churchill Falls, congratulations to them and all the best wishes in the world. We hope the very best for them in their continuing education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: With that, Mr. Speaker, I will move on to the grad that happened in Happy Valley-Goose Bay this past weekend at Mealy Mountain Collegiate: eighty-five grads. In stark contrast to the small intimate session that you have with Churchill Falls, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, eighty-five grads – a very big affair, if you will. It is very hard to get that many kids organized and all that.

I just have to say, just the way it was handled, the professionalism of all the teachers, the wonderful things that the students had to say about the teachers and vice-versa, the same as every other school in this wonderful Province, Mr. Speaker. Even with the teachers who jumped up for big flash mob in tribute to the kids, it was a wonderful affair.

I will say my own daughter, Alicia, graduated amongst that eighty-five. I love her very much and wish her all the best – but congratulations to every grad as well. They had a wonderful evening, a very well-planned-out safe grad with very, very high attendance, I will say. I will commend every committee, whether you are organizing the proms, the grads, the safe grads, all that stuff, it takes a lot to get stuff like that done; and time and time again we see people come out, give of their time, and companies, of course, around the various communities always throw in there to make sure things happen too. That is certainly the situation with Nalcor in Churchill Falls, as well as the business community around Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

So, with that, I just want to touch briefly on another project that has been happening in Lake Melville. We have a woods project between the Minister of Natural Resources and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs. I will say, Mr. Speaker, what we did was give a little tribute to the low income and the seniors in the District of Lake Melville by coming together with the two departments and putting a substantial amount of wood – Muskrat Falls wood, I will add, cut from the transmission lines to put that in the communities of North West River and in Happy Valley-Goose Bay as well for seniors and low income.

In the community of Sheshatshiu we have put a substantial amount of saw logs there to continue on with our sawyer training that we are having in that community as well. So I just want to say thank you to the minister for supporting our community. Thank you to all the people in Nalcor who worked together to make that happen so we can have a little bit easier access as a tribute to the people who have paved the way for us – our seniors, our elders in those communities. We are very appreciative of that.

I will say in commentary to the program, too, the wood was put there for everyone. I just want to reiterate to the people out there who might catch wind about this or hear – they might hear about the project, they might be availing of the project, taking a little bit of wood, but the bottom line here, the intent was for low-income people and seniors. So, we do not mind everybody going in there and grabbing a stick of wood or two, if the need is there, but we would like to make sure that the community puts it up to each and every one of us to make sure that we know who that wood is there for, and if you do see people who are perhaps maybe taking advantage of it, please just have a word with them, let them know what the intent was just to reaffirm why that wood was put there, Mr. Speaker.

So with that I am just going to talk a little bit more about some issues that I see with the Nunatsiavut Government and our community freezers; up in Labrador – and we see this across a lot of places in the North as well, even into Lake Melville, so I will go through Torngat Mountains into Lake Melville. We have community freezers, Mr. Speaker. It is odd, if you look at this year's Budget and you talk about the additional \$320,000 that this year's Budget puts into monitoring the caribou herds up in Labrador – a couple of weeks ago actually I was in Yellowknife and I talked with the Premier, Peter Taptuna, of Nunavut about the caribou situation in Nunavut as well. It is not isolated to Labrador. We are feeling pressures across the entire North of all the herds. We are doing a great job of monitoring the herd, Mr. Speaker, through Environment and Conservation. We are continuing to put that investment there. This year's Budget is no different but the trends are the same, very alarming, and whether we are talking about weather patterns, there are many different theories out there.

The elders are talking about predation, they are talking about insects, and they are talking about permafrost. There are many decent and different conversations happening depending on the region you are from, but the result is the same, Mr. Speaker. I applaud this government's initiative to continually look at those natural resources such as the caribou herds in Labrador and to keep a focus on, again, monitoring and the mediation of any type of work activity that

happens in Labrador so we can continue to have a focus on that herd.

With that, Mr. Speaker, just talking about the Nunatsiavut Government and the Inuit Community Corporations in my district, specifically right now I am going to talk about NunaKâtiget, run by Gary Mitchell – Gary, a very famous musician, is always out there playing for charitable events. God love Gary. Gary runs the NunaKâtiget community freezers and we have partnered with them through Advanced Education and Skills this year and the Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs to make sure that they have extra access to not only a little bit of farmland to do a little bit of farming for the seniors in our communities, but also some dollars to purchase some country food, if you will, some fish, some berries, some things for our elders, very special stuff, Mr. Speaker.

When people get up in age, and whether they are at the long-term care facility or they are taking home care workers into their own homes, a taste of the good life, I will say, where they happen to have a set of experiences and memories associated with fish that they got on the land or meat that came from the land, partridges, wild berries, wild meat, fruit, vegetables, all of that stuff, it is a very, very worthwhile initiative. I just want to say to Gary in NunaKâtiget you are going an excellent job there taking care of our seniors in our communities. Keep up the good work. Time and time again, I will be there and this government will be there to support your initiatives. I just want to say well done to everybody involved, Mr. Speaker.

Moving on now, I see my time ticking away as it always does. We are sitting here now in the House listening intently to each other talking across the way. I could not proceed any more without talking a little bit about some commentary from the other side.

The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi got up. I was just surprised because what we are getting is – usually we get the venom, Mr. Speaker, we get the negativity, the depression. I keep using that word depression because it is as if everybody's sole intent when speaking on that side of the House is to get up here and make sure people have fear in their hearts. They do not

feel that we need to have pride in ourselves as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We all know there is an election coming eventually here, and we all know the tactic behind that. The bottom line here is this, we are resilient people, Mr. Speaker. We can weather these storms. I have talked about this bump in the road pricing of oil and all that stuff. I have talked about that time and time again because I do not think we are going to fall apart. We just do not do that. That is not the way we are built. It is not the way Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are wired.

We can push the negativity and, look, that is fine. The member of the NDP who was up from Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, she got up and said we did some really wonderful things since this government took over when you look back as far as 2004. I was really shocked to hear it. At the same time she said we have done some wonderful things, but then we spent and spent and spent with no planning.

To me, Mr. Speaker, I will just be blunt, if you are going to say that then that is a slight. That is a slur against the public service in my opinion. You cannot simply sit here and put that out to the people out there in TV land, that one individual in charge of a department if you are in Cabinet, or the Premier makes all of these calls going ahead.

We have professional people, we have educated people, dedicated people in the public service who are there planning time and time again. Yes, things may change direction from time to time, and due to finances you might have to scale back on what your intentions are with certain initiatives as well, but we have good people. We have dedicated people. No matter where you are from on this side of the House or the other –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Look, I would like to generally think, all politics and game playing aside, Mr. Speaker, that we are here to do the best for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, no matter where you live, no matter which community you are from or which district you are from.

I will say that about the public service too. They are there to execute a function and that function is to be professional. It is to give it their all in their jobs, their daily work to make sure we do what is best for the people of the Province, to try to get the most bang for our buck, and try and touch as many lives with the initiatives that we do, whether you are talking about having safe roads, you are talking about health care, you are talking about all those good things.

I will just remind the member, you can get up and say that we do not plan. We have heard, I think the word of the day for the Liberals is now squander – squander, squander, squander. I will tell you what I see. I see infrastructure, billions and billions, Mr. Speaker. We have all seen it.

You do not have to kid people out there. You do not have to fear monger. You do not have to tug on their heartstrings and talk about things like long-term care and personal care and scare people into thinking there are better days ahead, because we do have some difficult times right now, a bump in the road. We are going to get through it. The bottom line here is this, Mr. Speaker, we have made those investments.

We have made investments in tax relief to put money back in the pockets of working people, of everyday working people, cheque-to-cheque people who need a little bit of a helping hand from time to time. We have made initiatives. We have put billions during our Administration into that, Mr. Speaker.

You talk about tax relief, you talk about infrastructure. Yes, we have managed to put money against that too, because here is what you are going to get from the Liberals across the way, Mr. Speaker. You are going to get – the member who spoke from Trinity – Bay de Verde got up, and great. I love to see people get up here with fire in their belly talking about their districts, doing those things. Then he got up and said, well, we need to spend more money on celebrations and we need to spend more money on tourism. That is great, but then they are telling you too that we are borrowing too much. So they are saying spend but do not borrow.

We have seen the confusion between the Leader of the Opposition and the Finance critic. One is

saying we are going to chop the heads off departments and then we are going to borrow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. RUSSELL: The other one is saying, no, we are not going to borrow. So they do not know what is going on.

We have all seen the exercise in planning; planning to plan, or a plan to plan a plan. I do not even know what that was, but it was met with sharp criticism. Because what you are seeing, Mr. Speaker, is you are seeing people without the responsibility to govern. I imagine it must be a very fun job, because you have no responsibility. You speak out of both sides of your mouth. You can be all things to everybody, Mr. Speaker.

We heard them talk about things like cellphone coverage and all that, and the people outside they know this. When you are dealing with large urban centres and there are markets in there for cost recovery for companies, it is very easy to get the investment in those types of districts when you want to expand coverage.

As you get out into the more rural areas, Mr. Speaker, everybody knows it is exponential, that graph, that costing model is going to go through the roof, because when you get out there you need to engage the federal government, you need to partner with the provincial government. Everybody needs to subsidize those activities.

I tell you what you get. You get the complaints over here. You get the complaints time and time again, all things to everyone. So people at home, I say, just remember that.

They have an opportunity to be all things to everybody because we hear people, and we hear it in Labrador. We hear sharp criticism about not having power lines running through all the small communities, and we know that. The fact remains is ratepayers have to cover that. Likewise, a company is going to look to recoup the cost of services if they were to do expansions in cellphone service out there as well.

When you talk about roads, Mr. Speaker, you have to have projects. You have to have as much economic activity in these regions to help drive that. One project leads to the next, and you can leverage those different projects against companies to get cheaper services and products brought in there too, Mr. Speaker.

What I am saying is all things to everyone, because they are not going to get up. They are going to criticize us at every turn. They are going to do it time and time again. Are they going to get up? Tell the Leader of the Opposition and the members in his districts, specifically the ones in Labrador – tell him to get up now and commit to a road connecting every community in the North and South Labrador.

Tell him to get up right now, Mr. Speaker, and say they are going to put power lines – the first thing they are going to do is lay out the asphalt and then we are going to put power lines to every single community with full broadband and cellphone service. Tell them they are going to do it. Tell them to stand up and make the commitment now.

MR. A. PARSONS: A point of order.

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

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

I would just like to point out – I know I am not supposed to reference it, but I would like to point out to the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs that the Leader of the Official Opposition is in Labrador today fighting for (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, look, it is wonderful –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. RUSSELL: I tell you what –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. RUSSELL: There is never a point of order. You see them stand time and time again but there is never one.

I tell you what, when it comes to what is happening in Labrador West, Mr. Speaker, we will be there to support the workers time and time again. Advanced Education and Skills, we will be there to support the workers time and time again. We will make sure that those families are going to be taken care of. That is just the way it is.

The response will be the same as it was for the people of Wabush when they needed a helping hand too, whether that came in the form of municipal subsidies, money in the hand of the council and the mayor to do what is needed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Or whether or not it is about taking people back in, re-educating them, and getting them trained to go to a different level of work, Mr. Speaker. It is the same thing. This all goes back to the same theme.

I say this to the people at home, the bottom line is this; they are all talking about the price of oil, the downturn in mining. They will bring up those points to you, guaranteed, time and time again. At the same time, they are complaining about what is happening with this commodity, or what is happening in this sector, what is happening in this vertical. They will do that time and time again. Then they will get up and then they will criticize us about our planning for Muskrat Falls and Lower Churchill.

They are telling us we have to watch out, you have to diversify. Then when it is time to diversify on a magnitude to the level never experienced by this Province in our history, which is what we have done with Muskrat Falls, not one of them stood up and voted for that either. They can talk about everything with one

side of their mouth and go to the other as it is convenient. They can plan to plan a plan to talk about a plan or do something to that effect. They can directly contradict each other along the whole way. The whole time, I say, Mr. Speaker, fear mongering, trying to keep people desperate, trying to keep people depressed about where we are headed. I say, have some pride in our Province.

We have resilient people. We have professional people. We have a school system that is second to none. We are dedicated to that.

You have all been out in your districts, just as I have been, to see the bright and promising young kids we have coming up through the school system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: A product of our system who have that twinkle in their eye. They are ready to get out there and take on university and go to the next level of education. Do you know what? Some of them are going to end up in here as leaders. Some of them are going to end up in the public service as top-line professionals, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Some of them are just going to blow our minds and go off into athletics and into the arts and into other different careers across the world and be just another shining example of products of our environment here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our school system, our dedicated teachers, our dedicated level of governance, which makes sure we keep those focuses where we need to be, which is on our kids, which is on our seniors, which are on those people who are vulnerable in our society that need our help from time to time, Mr. Speaker, that is how we do it over here.

We are not saying that things are going to be a little bit tough in the short term. We are not saying that at all. We are not saying that everything that was done inside government has been absolutely perfect because we would be fools to try and say that. We do not treat the public out there as fools as well.

We do not expect you to think that everything we are going to do over here is going to be the Midas touch, but I tell you what we are prepared to do. We are prepared to look at things. We are prepared to look at efficiencies. We are prepared to do what is right by the people of the Province. That is why we put out not a two or three-year plan, but a five-year plan to see us back to surplus.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: We are going to lay that out before the people.

I am just telling you, engage the people on all sides of the House, engage your MHA, and ask questions about what is going on in the economy. Ask your MHAs questions about what is in this Budget. Ask specific questions about what the needs and the wants are in the districts and ask about our plan. Ask about what we are going to do.

At the same time, when you are looking at an NDP or a Liberal candidate, ask them what their plan is too because there is nothing there right now. Like I said, they are talking out of both sides of their mouth, Mr. Speaker; all things to everybody.

It is a wonderful time to be in Opposition. Sure, but I tell you what. We understand they have a function. We understand that we are going to continue to govern by principle under the leadership of this Premier, under the dedicated Cabinet and dedicated members on this side of the House. We will be willing to talk and consult with the people of the Province and do what is right.

We are going to lay it out for them. The people will choose. They will see if they want somebody who knows what they are doing or somebody who is prepared to say anything and make people scared to the point where they think they have to make a move just based on what is coming out of their mouths on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I will take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to stand again and speak to this non-confidence motion on the Budget because the district I represent does not have much confidence in this Budget and they have far less in this government, Mr. Speaker. I am just bringing the message forward from the people.

I just listened to the minister for Labrador talk about the leaders, the youth that are coming up. I would be remiss if I did not mention that I just spent a beautiful evening in L'Anse au Loup where I watched twenty-one young people receive their Grade 12 diploma. It was a lovely graduation, youth from L'Anse au Clair to Pinware; some who have taken part in Youth Parliament and many who have written letters to me bringing their issues forward. I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, that those young people who are coming up, they are very bright and they are not going to put up with what past generations of Labrador people have. They are not going to lead the way tomorrow; they are leading the way today.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lake Melville said it must be some fun in Opposition. Well, I want to say to the Member for Lake Melville it is not very much fun when you fly up to your district every weekend like I do and you see the inadequacies, you see the injustice, you see the partisan politics that went on around this Province, and you see areas that are suffering.

No, it is not very much fun, Mr. Speaker, but I put my name forward to be a voice for the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair for Labrador and my critic areas as Advanced Education and Skills. Mr. Speaker, that is also an area that I take very serious, \$1 billion department and a lot of people impacted here, a lot of people on Income Support with issues. Housing issues are huge in that area; people that hang on the line for hours and hours.

Mr. Speaker, when I stand here and I have only have twenty minutes, I hardly know where to start. The Member for Lake Melville talked about we are a resilient people in this Province and we can weather the storm, but there comes a time when people demand change. When the writ is dropped, we are going to see that. Not the forty-eight people who are here in this House – and we are not playing house, it is very serious issues that we are dealing with. Every time I walk the stairs – I said it before. I saw them out there again, it is a sunny day, and every time I see the children out on the playground I think that is why we have a responsibility to make right decisions.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Minister of Transportation got up and said the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Loup likes to get up on her soap box. He said she is passionate. She likes to get up on her soap box and talk doom and gloom and talk about the ferry. Well, it is more than the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair who is concerned and that is upset about the ferry issue in the Strait of Belle Isle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: I hardly know where to begin when I talk about the ferry, but it is important that we talk about it, Mr. Speaker. We cannot let it go. Because over and over again we ask questions, we have concern, and what do we see from this government? Another example where put out an RFP and we will do our homework after.

Nearly one year after the RFP closed, after three delays, we had many, many assurances that the service would be in place in 2016. The Finance Minister did the mid-year update; there was no mention to the people. We went through the winter – I had mayors in from Labrador and we went through all winter waiting for an announcement. Up to the end of March, we were still being told – the people of Labrador who rely on the service, the people of the Province who rely on the service were still being told that they were standing by their commitment of 2016.

What happens a few weeks later, Mr. Speaker? Everything is changed, this ferry vessel replacement strategy – and they wonder why we

get up and we say we are last, we are least, and we are lowest. Who is still waiting? I think it is four new ferries that have been announced. Who is still waiting? Who is still waiting?

What happened? Why couldn't you get it right? Why couldn't you get it right? Did you not have enough time? It is shameful what people are travelling on. It is shameful what those people are enduring, Mr. Speaker, with that ferry service.

To turn around and say we are going to go out and we are going to consult with the people, it is a joke – it is a joke. It is an insult to the people that they are going to go out now into the communities and they are going to say tell us what you want. Mr. Speaker, it is not a new service; it is a service that has been running for decades. This government knows – I would be surprised if there is anybody over there who do not know the kind of boat that is needed. I would like some clarity from the minister if he is going to get up and speak again. I would love some clarity because, on the one hand, he is saying we are going to go out and we are going to consult with the people and we are going to ask the people what they want; but, on the other hand, he is in the media and he is saying we could not afford, we could not afford, and things have changed financially.

Guess what happens when things change? Guess who suffers? Guess who is the first to be cut, I say to the Member for Lake Melville? That is not fear tactics. That is not fear mongering. That is no plan. On one hand, you have the Premier down there announcing we are going to put away some money and we are going to save for a rainy day, but we cannot afford to give the people of Labrador a boat. Stay and use your forty-year-old Scandinavian reject. Have the little children and the seniors travelling on that boat. Have them stuck in the ice for over fifty hours. Have people paying hotel bills who went for an hour doctor's appointment, and they are coming home with \$2,000 and \$3,000 bills, and it is taking them months to pay for it.

If what I am saying is wrong, you stand up and tell me, and you tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that what I am saying right now is incorrect. You do that. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is right. What I am saying is right.

The people have been set adrift, they have been left.

The tide has gone out on the money that was available for the Labrador ferry. Can you believe that in 2015? People are outraged. They are upset, and now they are going to do this little – they have asked each MHA, give us a name for a transportation committee. When in fact they came back and said, no, give us two names because we want to pick. At the end of the day, we do not want you to pick who goes on the committee. That is how it went down. So, it is never really how it is in the media.

Mr. Speaker, we had a transportation committee a number of years ago. I have spoken to members of that transportation committee. They told me thirty recommendations were put forward, and not one was implemented. Now we are going to go through it again.

Like I said earlier when I was up on a petition, I am very pleased their Honours are visiting the district. Now I do not know what kind of time they are – their Honours are driving, and we are going to be on a tight schedule. They are coming into the district. They are coming on the ferry on Thursday – that is if everything goes well with the ferry, Mr. Speaker. They are going to see first-hand, and I would not be surprised but they are going to shake their head and say, I cannot believe we are in the same Province. I cannot believe we are in a part of this Province that has given so much, that has been so rich in resources, yet so poor in services.

I did not even mention the cost of preparing RFPs. Somebody said the cost to prepare an RFP for these ferries was up in the six-digit figures. One thing we do know, Mr. Speaker, is we know there are a lot of unknowns around the future, around when we are getting a boat in the Strait of Belle Isle. There are a lot of unknowns, because once again we have a situation where there was no plan.

My colleagues have all stood and they have talked about their respective critic areas, and they have outlined again and again what happens when you have no plan. My colleague for The Straits – White Bay North talked about the PC math.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of unknowns, but one thing we do know is that we do not have a boat, and we do not know when we are getting a boat. I would encourage the minister, if he is putting out an RFP this fall, to get up and tell the people what is the plan. Although, Mr. Speaker, I doubt there is anybody who is going to have any confidence anymore, no matter what they say, because it is just lip service.

The Member for Lake Melville talked about fear mongering and fear tactics. Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about is reality. The people are living the reality. They are experiencing the neglect. Lab West is not my district, but my husband has been working in Lab West since April. So he sees first-hand the devastation.

Our leader is up there listening to the people today. I am wondering why the Minister of Labrador is not up in Lab West listening to the people when we are reading articles in the paper about the janitors who are mopping up more tears than dirt. It is very, very difficult times, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased that our leader is on the ground up there right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have talked about in the last couple of years is that people matter, and if you cannot listen you cannot lead. I think that has been one of the downfalls of this Tory government.

As I travel throughout the Province that is what I hear from people, they did not listen. We have had examples over and over again of where millions of dollars has been spent, Mr. Speaker, because they have not listened. So we are doing what we can to move out and about around the Province. We will be doing that over the summer months, listening to the people and bringing the issues forward.

Today there was a Ministerial Statement that went out on waste management, Mr. Speaker. That is now moved ahead into 2025. My district, not unlike many others, is at a crisis state with our waste management. We have Crow Head overfilled to capacity. If any tourists are coming down through, they are going to drive through thick, heavy smog. Sometimes the dump is lit. They do not know who lights the

fire. It gets out of control. We have had a number of very serious circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of unrest right now. I have heard of municipalities that are actually so fed up with waiting for money, with waiting for a start. Hatch Mott MacDonald did the study that was done. Now it is time to put the money where the mouth is, to go down. If a one-site model is the site that is going to be the most cost effective, it is time for action. The time for talking is long far gone. We need to get this waste management issue moving or we are going to be having some very serious issues.

Capital works, Mr. Speaker; I have only been elected a little less than two years but I can tell you in the spring of 2013, \$65,000 came into Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. Imagine. If we are not playing partisan politics, how can you fathom such a small amount into a district where needs are so great? I am not talking about small – what is the minister –

AN HON. MEMBER: A new water system (inaudible).

MS DEMPSTER: We did get a water system in Charlottetown. We absolutely did. Do you know what? Everywhere around the Province, that is a very basic right, drinking water for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: If we want to talk about a cost to our health care, Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about a cost to an already staggering burden in our health care, we need to go out and we need to ensure that all of our residents have reliable drinking water.

The point I was making, \$65,000 came into the district in the spring of 2013, and in the spring of 2014 we got a whopping \$205,000 chlorine system in Cartwright. I think the twenty and the forty-five was for West St. Modeste and Mary's Harbour that were projects ongoing.

Mr. Speaker, we have around \$5 million in requests that are into the system. We know we cannot meet the needs every year, but my colleague for the Bay of Islands, I heard him on Open Line once last year. I think it was over

\$80 million that had been spent in the Tory districts and we were less than \$5 million in Liberal. This Budget is about Balancing Choices; \$80 million and \$5 million, tell me where the balance is, Mr. Speaker? Where is the balance in that?

My colleague for St. John's North called it lost opportunities and misplaced priorities. I call it, when I look at my district, instead of *Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*, to me it is imbalanced and leaves us with a darkening future. I do not know if I said that when I got up, Mr. Speaker.

Nonetheless, Capital Works, we have big issues. We still have communities – and I am not talking about small, unconnected communities that do have a lot of issues as well, but some of them we do not know whether they will be staying or whether they will be going. The sad reality is we have communities like William's Harbour that voted to relocate, and because this government is so slow moving through the process – they are spending millions on running the ferry service, airplanes, and everything else in and out when that is not setting a very good example for communities that may go.

Capital Works, there are some huge issues. I hope the minister will put a formula in place and we will allocate that, as I have said before, according to need.

Fire and Emergency Services, Mr. Speaker, huge needs in the district. I know there are communities that might have a decent fire truck, and there is a community ten minutes away that can address that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention a tragedy that happened in Cartwright this winter. Now if they want to accuse me of playing politics, I don't care as long as the word is out and maybe the need gets addressed. We have a community, it is the second largest community in my district, and for years they have been writing letters requesting a new fire truck. They get a letter back that says: thank you for application. All of the funds have been exhausted for this year. We encourage you to apply next year.

Mr. Speaker, we had a man and a wife, lovely people, who lost their lives. Do you know a fire

truck – they cannot even get parts for anymore, it is over thirty years old. They did not even have enough hose to reach from the fire station to the house that was burning. You tell me, Mr. Speaker, that is balancing choices for a promising future.

I hope that this year, even though we are in a tough financial situation, when money – because they do have to continue to provide a service to the people of the Province and govern. I hope they will look at the balancing choices and they will put partisan politics aside – and some of the needs of these people, firemen going out and volunteering for years and giving so much, but you have to be given some tools to do the job with.

Fire and Emergency Services: We have been weighed in the balance and we have been found desperately wanting. There are a number of applications in again from my area. I hope there will be consideration given to them, Mr. Speaker.

Broadband: I stand and I talk about broadband. I petition day after day after day. Mr. Speaker, what a mess. Half the district we have just got upgraded, but we have the communities of St. Lewis, Mary's Harbour, Port Hope Simpson, and Charlottetown. Mr. Speaker, I used to get up and say – and it seems to have gotten worse – that I could only send and receive emails. I had an email from the town council office in St. Lewis the other day. It took them half a day to download their email.

Mr. Speaker, imagine – I would like for the people here in the House to have to experience for a week, maybe a day, maybe one day, I would like for the people here who rely on technology to experience for a week what the people in these communities are putting up with when we have speeds at 0.06. When a bare minimum, the service provider themselves told them, was 0.79. Ideally, that should be something between 1.5 and 5. I am not a technical guru, but that is my understanding, Mr. Speaker.

Nobody can convince me that this government does not have some responsibility to ensure for the people of the Province that when a service provider is providing you a service that you are

getting something back for the money you are paying. That is not happening in this case.

We have a group of citizens who have come together. They have been looking at hiring a lawyer. They have been looking at seeing what they can do because they are very, very frustrated.

Mr. Speaker, the businesses in that area – wonderful people. They are so important to the region. We have endless fundraising and things like that in these little communities. Those businesses are dependable and able to be relied upon again and again, but it is not easy for them when they have such a high operating cost, when they have these Internet issues. When they are waiting for days and days to have goods comes on the ferry and their store shelves are bare, and then they wonder why some people are trying to bring in their own things and supplies when they can get out.

Education: Again and again and again I have said I believe that the Minister of Education has the most important job in this Province. I have said it and my colleagues have heard me say it. Why I say that is I go over to the Health Sciences and I look at all the specialists and I say: Where would we be without education? That is why everybody needs to be on a level playing field, and we cannot compromise education.

Oil and gas and all these things offshore, where would be without education? I love getting out to the graduations. We have some bright and upcoming sharp young people, but we are going to now cut 77.5 teaching units – I think it is a savings of \$7 million or \$8 million. It saddens me when I see the mismanagement of megaprojects like Muskrat Falls, spending \$4 million, and for the sake of a couple of days at Muskrat Falls we are going to have almost 200 teachers in this Province who are going to lose their jobs.

AN HON. MEMBER: The dome.

MS DEMPSTER: That is right; my colleague mentioned the dome. It is half built. We are not going to finish it. We did not need it. We are compromising our future, Mr. Speaker, with children out in these rural schools. As I went

through the district the last couple of weekends, many of the teachers are afraid to speak out and say much, but they are pulling me aside and they are saying we are very concerned. We do not know how we are going to be able to carry the load. We do not have the infrastructure, in a lot of cases, for more CDLI courses, and the slow Internet and things like that.

Mr. Speaker, I have to add, CDLI came online for rural schools – you have to be very self-motivated. Not every student can learn in an environment where they are in a room and they are stuck in front of a computer and they are on their own. So I am very concerned. There are a lot of sad people around the Province because the cuts that are coming down are cuts that are going to be very, very keenly felt.

I got up last week and talked about examples of waste, Mr. Speaker. So many examples of waste in this Province, yet we reach deep into the pockets of seniors to the most vulnerable to get us out of this mess, and then we start to cut the people who are teaching our children –

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member her time is expired.

MS DEMPSTER: I thank you for my time to speak again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is indeed a privilege to get up here again today and to speak on behalf of the people from the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. We are all here today and we are doing a bit of our debate on the Budget, and each side of the House has its own perspective of what we are doing here today. Just listening to the member on the other side, I can say she has a different perspective from what I do because I see positive things, and I always try to be positive. I always try to look at how things are going good.

Do you know what? There is no district in this Province – she might think she is the only one with a district in the Province that has issues. We all do. Every district in this Province there are issues. Whether it is school issues, whether it is transportation issues, whether it is roads that need to be done, we all have different needs.

Mr. Speaker, she gave good cases, boy, where she has some problems in her district, but she forgot to mention there were three new schools built in her district in just a very short little while. I mean, I think that is a very positive thing. She started off talking about education. She talked about the graduation she was at the weekend. I was wondering if that was one of the brand new schools that were built in her district that she was at the weekend. I would imagine the students –

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you saying they do not deserve it?

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, everybody deserves new schools. There is a new school getting built down my way. Just do not go finding all the bad stuff. Tell some good things that are happening in your district. If I had three new schools getting built in my district – I have one getting built now – I would be very, very happy. I think you should be the same.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I am going to stay away from that because that is not the way I am. I am going to try to be positive today. I am not negative, but I do understand and we do understand – as a government, our ministers in this caucus and Cabinet, and our Premier do understand that we have needs in this Province. We have a lot of needs.

We can look at different committees that we are on and everything else. We understand that there are things happening in the Province where people need improvements. There has to be improvements done. Whether it is roads or whether it is our health care, our education, or whatever, we do need to have improvements.

We are all working hard to make sure – I would like to have that magic wand to go boom, all done, everything is perfect, but we do not live in

that world, Mr. Speaker. So we have to be responsible. We have to be responsible to the people of our district. We have to be responsible to the people of the whole Province and understand that there are a lot of needs out there, there are a lot of priorities out there, and we have to address them as we go.

I am going to talk about my own district today. I spoke earlier. When I got up and spoke it was mainly about stuff that was happening in the Province and stuff like that. I am going to end it just talking about our Budget, aims of our Budget, and what we are planning on doing. Today I am going to stay focused and I am going to stay positive. I always try to stay positive on what is happening in Newfoundland and Labrador, in particular in the District of Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: That is what we hear on the other side is negativity all the time. There are a lot of good things. The hon. member – I mentioned that I was out playing golf in his district last Sunday. I had a half hour one morning and went down. The one thing that impressed me the most about going down through Whiteway was the wicked roads that are down there. The transportation down in that area, the roads were paved going through all the communities – and so they should be, but I was very impressed with the roads out there. I am sure the former member, Ms Johnson, did a great job for that district and making sure that a lot of her roads – but it is a beautiful district, there is no doubt about it.

That is another thing when we talk about tourism because the East Coast Trail is in my district and the weekend there was a lot of activity. There is a place in Flatrock called the Beamer and they walk out along and then they can walk right on back into Tapper's Cove in Torbay. To see the people who were on the East Coast Trail this weekend was amazing. There were a few icebergs out around and that obviously attracted some people, but it was nice to see so many people being able to get out and enjoy the East Coast Trails.

That is another investment we have done. Maybe that is squandering money, I do not

know, but I tell you for the people who are using the East Coast Trails and even a person like myself who grew up in the community, I did not realize it was so beautiful once you go along those trails and walk right in around. It is really, really nice. I invite anybody from Newfoundland and Labrador to come to the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis because there are a lot of really nice trails down there with the East Coast Trails and it is really nice to walk along those trails. There are a few icebergs still down around, so you are more than welcome to come down.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had a fundraiser in my district, and I want to thank the people of Cape St. Francis again. We had a very good turnout. I must say, it was a really good turnout that I had. I had to move my venue from one area to another because that many people wanted to come. Then I had to put an order in – it was good. It is nice to see because at that time you get to meet and you get to talk to a lot of people in your district and you understand the needs and stuff like that.

I had someone introduce the Premier at the time and I found out where his roots really came from. The Mayor of Pouch Cove got up and he talked about the Premier and when the Premier was young, his aunt lived in Pouch Cove. At the time, he used to come down every second – they were a very close family; he used to come down all the time. The first Mayor of Pouch Cove was the uncle of the Premier. I figure now that is where the Premier got his start in politics was in my District of Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing that was most evident the whole night long as the Premier went around and he spoke to everyone, they all just realized that he is an honest, good man and he is there for the right reasons. I was very proud to have him in my district and he was very sincere to the people and they really liked him there. I have to say, I have to take my hat off and thank the Premier for coming down and letting the people see who he really is about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I believe the people in this Province as they see this Premier and they see his sincerity, his honesty, and how he wants to

see this Province and the plan that he has – he has a plan for the future of our Province. It was very nice and I want to thank him, and I just wanted to mention that because it was a great event in my district and I felt good that night because so many people came out and showed their support and it is nice to have that in your district.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about education and I want to talk about education in my district because over the last number of years the other side has told us that we are squandering money and stuff like that. I just want to talk about investments and I am going to talk about what was just recently announced, but I want to go back a little bit and show that we have invested so much in education right across the Province.

I am just going to tell a little story first. I was at Memorial University with a couple of hon. members from Burgeo – La Poile, the Member for St. John's Centre, the Member for Terra Nova, and the Member for Bonavista North. We were at a little thing there; they were giving us a presentation. Before we started, the Member for St. John's Centre asked a question. I was blown away by the question that she asked. It is the reason I am going to state here today. She asked the question, there was a young doctor there – training to be a doctor – she was from British Columbia. Before we started the presentation, she wanted to know, she said I wonder can you tell me – she wanted to talk about tuition; she wanted to get into the political part and talk about tuition.

The question is asked: Can you tell me how much tuition you are paying? I am sure it is high and the young doctor from British Columbia said: Yes, we are paying \$6,500 – I think that is for the one year, for the full year. That is what it costs here.

She said: Oh my God, that is high. The young doctor from British Columbia said: No, not really at all because if I went to school in British Columbia, I would be paying \$18,000. Right here in Newfoundland you can go to school for \$6,500.

There was another doctor there too. He spoke up and he said: That is not bad in British Columbia because if you came from Ontario the

average cost, the same course, the identical same course, would have been \$21,000. I am there looking now and I am saying: Gees, I can see why there are so many people who want to come to go to school here.

I asked a question: So what is the average across Canada? Does anyone know what the average is? They told me it was around \$18,000; the lowest probably was around \$17,500. Do you know what? I was proud to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian because I know that the investments we have made over the years – and we are after hearing a lot about tuition and everything else, but when we can put doctors in our medical school for \$6,500 that is a great investment.

Then I found out afterwards that our investment in the tuition freeze over the last number of years has been about \$370 million, which is huge. Do you know what? That is where it should be. We are investing in education. Listen, we all live in world where we understand we have to pay for things, but do you know what? When we offer the lowest tuition fees in all of Canada, I am very proud to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian because we give our young people opportunities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: We give our young people opportunities to have a great education.

I listened to CBC then a couple of mornings afterwards and the lady was on and she was talking about different rates and stuff like that. It was the same thing; one cost of a course was \$3,500 where the average in Canada was \$13,000. I just want to mention that today because that is so important. Those are investments we have made.

Now, investments we have made in my district; over the last number of years I have Holy Trinity High, Holy Trinity Elementary, Cape St. Francis Elementary and St. Francis of Assisi elementary over in Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove which I was over on Saturday night. I want to applaud the school council over there. What a fundraiser they had. They had a silent auction and then they had an auction. They raised over \$60,000 for the school which was remarkable.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: That community, I tell you, they really got out and supported their town. Our government has supported education in my district. We did a million dollars' worth of renovations on that school. There are new windows, new siding, and a new roof. Inside is absolutely beautiful. That is an investment well made.

At Holy Trinity Elementary we have built a school. The school opened in 2008. The population in my area has grown like you would not believe. They are bursting at the seams, but we have done things. That school itself cost \$15 million. That was in 2008. We put in modular classrooms, four to be exact, there now to adjust to the growing needs of the school. That alone cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to do that. The same thing down in Cape St. Francis down in Pouch Cove, Shoe Cove, we invested in it here.

Right now today, as I was down last week I had a complaint from a couple of constituents. One constituent called and said that there were too many rocks coming off the road and there was too much construction on the go where the new school is getting built. Another constituent called and said that the brush that was cleaning off the road is holding up the traffic too long so I did not know which one to do. It was a great complaint because do you know what? In my district right now there is a brand new school getting built at \$19.9 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: So we are after hearing lots of things in the House here about how big it is, but the school itself is built for about 720 children. The school itself is designed. The design of the school is for future expansion. If you look at the numbers that are coming down for what you can see in the area, if the area continues to grow like it is, we will probably be looking at expansion of that school in 2021. That then, the way the school is designed, it is built on a ten-acre piece of property. If you read the spec from the school it says for future expansion. The school is designed for future expansion. That means the cafeteria size is huge, the labs are bigger, and there are lots of

washrooms there. The design of the school will be like that.

Right now, the Grade 8's will be staying at the high school where they should be because it will keep the numbers right. That will be good for the high school. The high school is going to lose Grade 7's this year and they are going to be in perfect shape. Lots of classroom sizes are K-4 in Pouch Cove and K-4 at Holy Trinity Elementary. I am really pleased with what is happening with the schools in my area and I am really pleased our government is investing so much money in education.

Mr. Speaker, I heard about squandering money and stuff like that. Last night I was down to the Jack Byrne Arena. Every year I go down, and they have their election of officers and they have their AGM. Every year my job is to run the election of officers and stuff like that. I go and I like to listen to what happens.

I was involved in minor hockey all my life. I coached for thirteen years. I was on the executive for about ten years. So it is nice to go back and see how things are done. Every time I walk into the Jack Byrne Arena I am just proud of the facility that is down there, and proud that it is in my district.

That arena is doing really, really well. The East Coast Music Awards were down there this year. There was a cheerleader thing there this weekend. The place was absolutely packed. The arena itself is making money. They are doing really, really good.

Last night at minor hockey – and we talked a little about it afterwards, because there were a couple of guys there my age who came through the same system I did, where we had to fight for ice time. We had to fight for everything else. They use other arenas because Jack Byrne cannot handle it for the times – they want it all the time anyway, but they have to use (inaudible). They are going to be up next year to about fifty-four hours. This year at the Jack Byrne they have about forty hours they can use. So they are fourteen hours outside.

Do you know the nice thing the Jack Byrne Arena did? When the Jack Byrne Arena was built – there are 748 children in minor hockey in

our area this year. Before it was built, there were 167. Now that is an investment in a recreation facility. We always talk about it, I know the Opposition do, everybody talks about getting our children healthier, getting our children off the couch and getting them active. That is an investment that I am very, very proud of in my district.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the Torbay Bypass Road. I drive up the Torbay Bypass Road every morning. That is another thing that opened in 2008. The total cost of the road was like \$23 million. So the cost to this government was around \$18 million. You should see what that has done for the people in our area.

One of the main reasons why our area has grown so fast is because people want to go down there. It is easy. Anywhere on that bypass road, get on that and you are probably about six or seven minutes away from Stavanger Drive and all the amenities out that way, with Costco and Dominion and everything else. So it is really good. You are really close to everything.

Mr. Speaker, we had so many years, that I can remember, being stuck in traffic coming up out of Flatrock, there for hours at a time, because of people stuck on Piperstock Hill. In the last couple of years that has been open, we have not heard one complaint about anything. So it is a really good investment. I want to thank the government on behalf of the people of Cape St. Francis for doing that because it was something that was needed, it was a planned road, and now it is working out perfect.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about – I am getting down there, aren't I? I am going to talk about my towns. I just want to talk about individual towns in my district. Again, the member was up from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and she talked about issues in her district. We have issues in my district.

There are water issues in Pouch Cove. Last year we invested something like, \$900,000 was allotted for a new water treatment at the water supply area, but before we could do that, we had to – there were a lot of leaks in the lines and stuff like this. We had to get the water consumption down. The Town of Pouch Cove has worked so hard at this, it is unbelievable.

They are at the point right now where they have it to a level of where it should be. So we are looking in the near future for them to get started with their engineering part on this and the town area.

The big thing, since they reduced the consumption of water, it seems like the water is after getting a lot better because I guess where there was not so much coming out and now it is a lot clearer and a lot better. That is a great investment that this government has made in one town in my area.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Town of Bauline, it is a beautiful little town. If anybody ever gets the chance to go there, go down over the hill and you are looking over at Conception Bay. It is absolutely beautiful. It is very, very beautiful.

AN HON. MEMBER: What a mayor.

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, they have a great mayor down there. The mayor down there is a real good mayor, I have to say.

They have a new town hall they are getting built right now. We are hoping it will be open by the middle of the summer. That was an investment this government made of \$1.8 million. Now their town hall, where they meet to have their regular meetings, is in an apartment. If they had to have a public forum they used to go down into the United Church and sit in the United Church.

If there was a function that needed to be done or anything in their town, they would have to go somewhere else, over to the Lions Club over in Pouch Cove to have a dinner or if it was a – I do not know, it could be a birthday party, it could be anything at all, a shower or something like that, they had to go out of their town. So in the month of July when this opens, I am going to be very, very happy, and I know the people in Bauline are going to be very happy to see that this was invested.

The Town of Flatrock, recently we just did the Flatrock Community Centre. The hon. Minister of Environment was down the weekend and did a great job down in Flatrock with the (inaudible). They were down, and there were people from all over the Province. They hosted

a beautiful dinner there Saturday night in the community centre. The community centre is all revamped.

Now the Town of Flatrock invested a lot of their own money in that too. We got them some money but they did a huge investment and took out a loan because they wanted it done the way – but right now in the community, it is absolutely beautiful. It is a nice spot to go to. Like I said, it is a big plus for this government for making the investments that they made in it.

Mr. Speaker, Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, another town in my district. They just recently did a flood risk analysis in the town. They went and checked out – they have a lot of problems down there when it comes to water coming down from Stavanger Drive, where Stavanger Drive is after building up and there is a lot of water coming down. The culverts in the area are not as big as what they should be to take the water.

They did a flood risk analysis and last year the government gave them \$400,000-and-some-odd to replace some culverts. This year it looks like they are going to get some more money to replace even more culverts. So they are very pleased with what is happening. That town is growing like you would not believe. It is a beautiful town also.

The Town of Torbay now has their tender out for their new depot that they are building in the town. The depot I think is going to be somewhere around \$2.8 million or something like that, almost \$3 million. That is something that they are doing. The Town of Torbay is one of the fastest growing towns in the Province. They do a lot of work within their town. They have a great council down there and people working very, very hard for their town.

Mr. Speaker, I have to talk about the City of St. John's too. The City of St. John's right now is a part of my district. All you have to do is just look around down around the Stavanger Drive area. I know on Torbay Road right now, there is all kinds of paving getting done. Pyramid is down cutting out this here all over the place. So there are huge investments in the City of St. John's, hundreds and hundreds of millions of

dollars that this government has been investing into the District of Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a few minutes left, but I heard the member over across the way talk about the least, the lowest, and the worst or whatever. What is happening in Cape St. Francis is the best.

Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is my second opportunity to speak on the Budget today. I look forward to making some comments related to the substance of the Budget itself, some comments related to some of my critic responsibilities, and also some comments related to my district and issues that are present in my district, Mr. Speaker.

The Budget is one of the most important functions that this House of Assembly does. The government brings forward a Budget and then the House together examines the Budget that was brought forward. There is a certain amount of time allotted in the House for the examination of the Budget, for the Budget Speech. The procedure is well established and we go through it.

We also have a process that happens outside this House in the evening and in the morning when the House is not in session, which is the Estimates Committees. Each department's expenditures are examined line by line in the Budget, and we have an opportunity to ask questions to the minister, to departmental officials, in some cases, and to really get an understanding of how this government spends its funds, and what results they get for the funds they have.

So, one of the most important functions that we conduct here in this House is to bring forward a Budget and to pass a Budget for the Province, and the plan of how we are going to spend the money that we received and how we are going to raise the money we spend, Mr. Speaker.

The Budget debate, as well, because it is about the finances of the Province, it is usually a wide-ranging debate, and people are able to talk about a very wide range of items that they want to talk about. So it is usually a debate that is very wide ranging, Mr. Speaker. So it is a great opportunity to talk about some various types of issues, and that is why I intend to do here this afternoon.

So, Mr. Speaker, first I want to talk about an issue that I raised in Question Period today. The SERT Centre in Stephenville is a wonderful centre. It is the Search and Emergency Rescue Training Centre. It is quite the facility – I have had an opportunity to visit the facility, to tour the facility. It is a place where training is done for firefighters, for people who need certification so they can operate their boats. They even have a mock-up of an airplane crash there that they set on fire and they go out and they put the flames out. They also do industrial training for industry, various industries. They will develop programs and sort of contract out their services and their facilities to industries in this Province, and also industries outside this Province.

This week, for example, they have a group from Iqaluit who is coming down to do some training at the centre. So the centre is doing training not just for firefighters here in this Province, they are also doing firefighting training for other provinces. That speaks to the excellence of this centre that exists in Stephenville now.

I have been very disturbed in this Budget with the cuts to Memorial University and the way that has trickled through the system, and the impact that is having on places like the SERT Centre. I met with some employees at the SERT Centre this weekend, and they were very concerned. The contractual employees have already been told that their contracts will not be renewed. Some of these employees are looking at being laid off in June; some later in the summer, but it is a very immediate thing for them.

I find this very disappointing because when I initially asked questions in this House about how this SERT Centre was going to be impacted by the cuts to Memorial University and the Marine Institute in the Budget, there did not seem to be a high level of awareness amongst the government about what the possible impacts

would be, which is very concerning because this SERT Centre is one of the main sources of revenue. The SERT Centre rents space and facilities from the airport in Stephenville, so it is a source of revenue for the airport that has been struggling for a number of years, Mr. Speaker.

It is rather concerning that there is not a sort of level of commitment to this centre and it is also concerning that there was not an awareness of the impact that such a closure would have. It is also concerning that there was not really a concerted effort by government to ensure that this wonderful centre that exists remains in place.

It is all very concerning and I will continue to ask questions about what is happening there, what government is doing, because I do think there are things that government can do. I think there are win, win sort of scenarios that they should be exploring. For example, one of the things that I think government should be exploring in relation to this centre is the volunteer fire departments around this Province. Many of them have difficulty raising the funds they need to do the training they need to provide firefighting and rescue services around this Province.

I think there is a need for the training; there is a wonderful facility there that can do the training, Mr. Speaker. They even have a mobile burn unit which they can – one of the major expenses of the training is the transportation to the training site and this SERT Centre has a unit that they can take right to the town where the volunteer fire departments are. All they need I think is a little assistance from government to the fire departments for training to make that a real possibility, Mr. Speaker.

I am also concerned – the centre is experiencing a short-term downturn in the business that they generate through contract training because of the downturn in the resource sector. That is impacting the amount of training that is being done at the centre. It is a short-term problem. If the government allows this centre to deteriorate or to be compromised because of those short-term problems the centre will not be there when the resource sector rebounds, when the training is needed.

Rather than training our own firefighters, training our own safety workers, emergency response workers, we will be sending our people somewhere else to be trained, Mr. Speaker, when we have the possibility of creating a centre for excellence here at this facility that exists in Stephenville. We have real possibilities to create a centre for excellence and to market that across the country, and even internationally. It is very disappointing what is happening to the SERT Centre in Stephenville and the lack of commitment that this government has to that centre.

That is one issue I wanted to talk about today. Another issue I wanted to talk about related to the district is health care services. One of the major issues in the district that I represent is the lack of doctors or nurse practitioners and also the wait times and the lack of specialists the hospital in Stephenville.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Jeffrey's has been without a doctor for about a year-and-a-half years now, so it is rather disturbing that people in that community do not have access to basic, primary health care that they need. That has been the case for over a year-and-a-half now. It is a very serious problem. You have elderly people who do not have the consistency of care that leads to good medical care. They do not get their reports back in an adequate manner and you have elderly people travelling long distances, waiting for a long time to see a doctor, or just simple things like to have a prescription refilled or something like that. Mr. Speaker, it becomes very problematic.

Also, people on workers' comp or things like that, that require forms to be filled out, it becomes an added burden to them. People are already in difficult situations having to travel long distances to get the medical services they need. So it is not a good situation. Many people have called me about it. I have had mothers with small children call me and say how this is impacting their lives.

You can make a connection, I think, between things like a lack of medical care and the economy, Mr. Speaker. It is not much of a stretch, because some of these young parents are telling me: Well, if the government cannot provide good health care, basic health care for

me and my family here in this rural community, then we have to think about moving away. We have to think about going somewhere else because the health care is so bad.

That is the connection with the economy. Skilled educated people are talking about moving away because of the lack of good health care in the district. It is a big issue. It is something I will continue to speak out about in this House until it is resolved.

St. George's is another community that just lost their doctor. I am hopeful that things will improve in the next few months, Mr. Speaker. I have talked to the minister. I have talked about it in the House several times. It is something that we have to continue to work on.

In terms of post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the college headquarters in Stephenville is one of the major employers in the district that I represent. It is a great facility. They just announced they are establishing a centre of excellence for heavy equipment training in the Stephenville-Bay St. George area. That is a great thing that is happening there. I am sure it will be a success because they have many qualified instructors. I understand they will be hiring more to bring them to the area. So that is a very positive thing, Mr. Speaker.

The whole concept of post-secondary education and the importance of it as an economic generator, I think the evidence is in for many years that places that invest in education do better economically in the long run. The evidence is in. Anywhere in the world that you see places where people have invested in education, their economy does well in the long run. There is certainly a connection there. It is an investment rather than a cost or simple expenditure. Those are some of the things that we need to be focused on, Mr. Speaker.

Research and development is another area closely related to post-secondary education. It is interesting that the College of the North Atlantic is doing a lot of research and development in their various campuses, Mr. Speaker, and also at Memorial University.

It was interesting to look at the report for the Research and Development Corporation this year. One of the people they focused on was a dairy that happens to be located in the district I represent. This dairy is doing some wonderful things in terms of technology and the research, and the way they operate their business, Mr. Speaker. It is a wonderful example of how technology can make a traditional business more competitive. It is a demonstration of how important technology is into every sector of the economy.

One of the things they are doing there is they are generating electricity at the facility, Mr. Speaker. They have found ways to do that through the waste of the dairy. They have one problem; they generate more electricity than they need. They cannot sell that into the grid because this government has not brought in a policy of net metering. That is one of the things.

It was interesting to see the way in the report they talked about maybe in the future, sometime in the future this great research and development project could result in the power being sold to the utility, and generating a revenue. It is interesting that in this case government's policy is really restricting research and development – the implementation of research and development, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take a few minutes as well to talk about the Generations Fund, the idea of a future fund where you take some of the revenue from oil and gas, natural resource revenue, and you put it into a fund for future use, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the eight principles that were outlined in this year's Budget, is this concept of a Generations Fund. It is not a new idea, it is not a novel idea, but it is a good idea. It is rather disappointing that in this case the government did not put forward any details on how that Generations Fund is going to work.

There are other places in the world where the idea of a Generations Fund or a futures fund or a sovereign wealth fund has been very successful. One place is Norway, another place is Alaska. Some people point to Alberta but that is sort of a case that is debated a lot, whether they have been successful in maintaining their revenue or not.

There are a lot of questions to be asked about a Generations Fund or a futures fund that are not answered in this Budget document, Mr. Speaker. For example, how much of the resource revenue will go into this fund? In Norway, 100 per cent of the oil revenue goes into their sovereign wealth fund; 100 per cent of the revenue generated from oil and gas off their shores is put into a sovereign wealth fund.

It is by chance that oil is placed and discovered off our shores, Mr. Speaker. It is by chance. It is not anything that the people of this Province have done in terms of the placement of the oil. It is a bonanza, it is a bonus. It is like winning a lottery really, and how do you spend that money? How should you manage that money, are some of the questions, Mr. Speaker. That is some of the questions we have, that I have about.

Also, Mr. Speaker, another question with future funds is how does the money come out? What restrictions are on the money, taking the money out? Can you take it out whenever you want? Can you take all of it out? Can you just take the interest out? Those are some sort of questions people have asked about Generations Funds and the future of how it would work, Mr. Speaker.

Those are some questions that are unanswered in this Budget. I think these are questions that we should be asking, and questions we should be discussing and debating in this Province as we move forward.

Alaska is another example. They put 25 per cent of their revenue into their future fund, and it is has been quite successful. In fact, they pay dividends to their citizens each year from their oil and gas fund, Mr. Speaker, from their resource fund. It is an interesting concept. So there are lots of issues in relation to how the Generations Fund works.

There are a few other issues that I wanted to raise. I have only a few seconds left, so I will probably get another opportunity to speak in this debate, Mr. Speaker, on the Budget. I would like to speak a little more about the Generations Fund next time I get up, and also touch on some issues such as agriculture in the district, and the road repairs that are needed in the district.

There are so many bad roads in the districts. One of the reasons the members opposite say that they had to spend the money was because there was an infrastructure deficit. Well there is still an infrastructure deficit after having spent \$21 billion. There is still much of an infrastructure deficit in the Province, Mr. Speaker. I will have an opportunity to speak about this later when I rise again in debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works representing Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed an honour again to get up and speak to the Budget, particularly, as I sit here and listen over the last number of weeks to my colleagues here speak about the great things that are being done. Particularly, think about the visionary things. Think about the things that we have put in play over the last twelve years, Mr. Speaker, that we have put in play to improve the lives of people in this Province. There is a multitude of them.

All my colleagues here – the Member for Cape St. Francis noted a number of great things that have happened in his district. The Member here for Lake Melville has talked about the great things happening in his district, but more importantly, where we are going, how we have set a trend here to improve people's lives, and to move things forward, Mr. Speaker.

I could go on. I know the Opposition have – as part and parcel of their responsibility – to outline what they think are the things that we are not doing, or the things they would prefer for us to do. Ideally, we would like to do everything. We would like to be the perfect landlord and steward for everybody in this Province, but, Mr. Speaker, we have to live within our financial means. We have to know that when there are lean times we can make the decisions that minimize the impact on people, and guarantee that people still have a

quality life, and that we can move things forward.

We get criticized and the numbers change from \$12 billion, to \$15 billion, to \$18 billion of oil revenues. Mr. Speaker, whatever the number they use over there we know \$15 billion was brought in through oil revenues. We know that went back to the people of this Province. We know decisions were made to improve their lifestyle, to improve safety, to better find ways to engage them, to give them a better sense of pride in this Province, and also to make us better competitors on the national and international market.

I mean, \$6 billion; I know as Minister of Transportation and Works going through what we have invested over the last twelve years, it is in the basic infrastructure, the day-to-day infrastructure needs. If it is a bridge, if it is a road, if it is a hospital, if it is a school, if it is a library, if it is a recreation facility, Mr. Speaker, that is where the money went.

AN HON. MEMBER: Over on Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Bell Island will get its fair share, as did every part of this Province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: They do not want me to go to my list again because I will go through who wins the jackpot when it comes to infrastructure. Do you know who wins the jackpot? The people of this Province, Mr. Speaker, that is who wins the jackpot because that is what it is about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: It is about fairness. If it is from Nain, Labrador or Carbonear in Conception Bay and everybody in between, they get what is needed to ensure they have a good quality of life.

Now does it all come at the one time? No, Mr. Speaker, there might be a hospital built in one community and there might be some challenges on the roads. Those roads will be addressed. In another community there might be a school built

and there might be some issues around recreation, but you can see the differences.

There was a wide need when we took over here. We realize that the previous Administration could not do everything for everybody either. We were fortunate enough, through proper investments and through proper negotiations with the oil industry, to have that extra revenue, Mr. Speaker. We have invested it wisely. We have guaranteed that people have access to proper services.

You can look around anywhere in this Province. It is not segregated to one region. It is not segregated to one geographic peninsula. It is not segregated, politically, to how people voted. It is out there because of the needs of the people. They were identified.

The same civil servants who advise politicians and advise those in Treasury Board, in Cabinet, and in government are the same people who live in these communities. They want to avail of those services. They know where the priorities are, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to say that this Administration has been cognizant of those priorities and have moved them fairly along the way, Mr. Speaker. That is why we do not get much kickback from people. Very little noise do we get from people because they realize we have done things where the priorities have been. We have done it. We have put schools where we needed to put kids in seats where there was a challenge, or schools were not safe.

We have improved roads where we knew there were heavy volumes of traffic. We have done that. We have talked about how we improve recreation so that our society is healthier. We have engaged people to be able to do that. We have looked at services in regions so that everybody in a catchment area would have access to proper health care and proper counselling services. We have done that. We have done it, I think, very diligently and very prudently because we have made the proper investments for people here, Mr. Speaker.

So I also talked about \$3 billion. While we were doing that we were very cognizant that our generation, the next generation, and the future

generations cannot inherit a massive debt. We were smart to plan. We knew one day – there are cycles up and down, there are peak and valleys – that there would be a day where we would have to go back to the market. We would have to borrow money again to build the same proper services for people, and to make sure people still feel comfortable, safe, and healthy living in this community, Mr. Speaker, so we paid down \$3 billion on the debt.

From somebody who comes from the civil service, and is very proud to have served for nearly thirty years as a civil servant, Mr. Speaker, in different capacities, we wanted to make sure the civil servants who carried this Province and did their part with everybody else in this Province, that their pension money was secure, that they had worked to realize that. I mean as anybody will tell you when you joined the civil service you knew you were never going to get rich in your jobs, but you took on the vocation because you knew you could service people. You knew from the day that you felt you have contributed to the Province that you would have a nest egg there; you would have a pension that you could rely on. You would not get rich on it, but you knew it was safe there.

When we knew there were things in jeopardy when it came to the pension plans we sat down with the stakeholders. All the proponents sat down and said, yes, realistically this makes sense. We need to invest in certain areas and we did this in a multitude of our pension plans, particularly our Teachers' Pension Plan, which was one that had some real challenges for a period of time.

We made them secure. We have since then come up with a new approach here, where everybody has bought into it, and we are finalizing the last parts of the agreements with the other unions where we move forward on it. We have a plan where they are sustainable and they are not a burden to any other taxpayers as we move forward, Mr. Speaker. That is prudent planning.

To get to that point, along the way when we had our extra revenues coming in from the oil industry we invested. We paid down. We secured those pension plans so people could feel better when they came to work and know that

they could concentrate on their jobs and not worry about it. The union officials could worry about representing their membership in other areas if there was internal strife that they had to work with, or if there was training that they needed, or there were supports. The bigger picture was taken care of, Mr. Speaker. One of the key things that I think has been done in the last year is that we have secured that for people.

We have nearly 40,000-plus civil servants of some manner here who have pension plans who now have some security. We have a plan for the rest of the people in this Province, those who unfortunately do not have a pension plan. This is not going to be a burden on them for the rest of their lives or their kid's lives. This is done in a manner, Mr. Speaker, where the investments are proper for the people. This is proper planning. This is where we have gone with this.

Tax relief; people forget we have put money back. People have told us we have been burdened from taxes for years and years from Administrations over and over, we need a break. If you give us that break, we will reinvest back into our own communities. We give people tax breaks. We have done that. We have reduced the personal income tax, Mr. Speaker. We found programs and services there to give back to those who have some challenges financially to ensure they have a better quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, we have done it to the tune of \$3 billion. That is an investment back into the people of this Province. It is an investment back where they now take the money and they get to decide where they want to invest, what they want to spend it on, how they want to drive the economy, how they want to support their own families, and how they want to be good stewards of the money they bring in.

That is what it is about. Good governance is about being able to give people the ability to be their own governance. That is what we have done in this case, Mr. Speaker, when it came to the financial part of it.

Mr. Speaker, billions were put back into other programs and services. We have initiated new youth services programs for people. We have new strategies around what we have put in our drug dispensing programs to ensure that people

have the proper drug medication that addresses their medical needs.

We have added hundreds of new drugs to that plan, Mr. Speaker. That is again a testament to being identified, working with the medical professions and working with the citizens who need certain things, but being able and understanding to address the needs that people need to have a comfort level physically, mentally, and socially. We have added in all of those. That is part and parcel of what we wanted to do. We have added into all kinds of investments when it comes around what we have done, particularly around recreation, from the whole inclusion – from toddlers to senior citizens, and all of those types of investments.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that I am proud to say that this Administration has done over the last number of years is shown respect for its civil servants. We have shown respect through reclassification, through salary increases. This Administration came in and sat down with the civil service and asked them at one point – we have a problem here. We have a financial crisis. Can you work with us? Give us an opportunity to get to the next level, and we will reward you for the great work you have been doing; we will reward you for being co-operative and helping us.

Mr. Speaker, that happened. The civil servants still gave you an honest day's work. They still went out and developed the programs. They still went out and advised the government on what were the best things to do. As a result, we rewarded them. The standard of living here for a civil servant has increased dramatically. We are ahead of the Atlantic Provinces, and we are on par nationally.

In my day when I started here, and I know my colleague for Port de Grave, when we started here thirty-plus years ago, it was not at that – it was not. When we went to national meetings, we knew our colleagues were being paid at a different level, but we understood that. We understood the restrictions, financially, this Province had. As we moved money and became more of a have Province that have ability was given back to those who have helped foster and move the Province forward. That is again an avenue of being respectful for the people who

have helped develop programs and services, who will help do that, no matter what Administration is in power.

I have been fortunate enough to have been through four full-time Administrations, four different party changes, Mr. Speaker. I have also been sat down to look at thirty-one different Budgets and know which ones really meet the needs of what people are saying, which ones are politically oriented, which ones are cut and dry, which ones are definitely going to do harm to people, and which ones are going to be the ones that are really going to moved things forward. That has happened with all Administrations.

I can say this was perhaps the best one I have seen that was balanced – that took a hard financial core and opened it up to make sure of minimum impact on anybody. In a lot of cases, things were enhanced. We have enhanced thresholds for low-income people to be able to have access to better services and more revenues that they can put back into whatever their priorities are, back into their families. We have managed to do that when you are having to find a billion-dollar savings.

So that is being creative, Mr. Speaker, and the creativity came from listening to stakeholders. Our stakeholders' message comes from not only seeing a stakeholder day to day, but the civil servants who on a day-to-day basis are meeting with hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands of them through the programs that they service. Channelling that back up when we get our advice around programs and services, and what budget lines are important, and which ones have been put on the backburner, and which ones can be modified, and which programs have served their need for a number of years.

Politicians are as good as we are on both sides, no matter what party you are. There is a line item there that is based on the people who are the front liners who would know what to do. We get great advice, Mr. Speaker. This Budget is reflective of that great advice we have gotten from our civil servants along the line. That is why I think we have had minimal impact on people's lives.

Is it perfect? By no stretch. Are there people falling through the cracks? Of course there are, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are trying to find other ways, other services, and ensure that our civil servants are trained to be able to deal with organizations. More particularly, we have opened it up to having discussions. The all-party mental health committee is another great way of engaging people around – there are people who fall through the cracks in every part of society, particularly some around mental health. How do we find a better way to develop the programs and address their needs? Or give them access, or give them knowledge of where the programs and services are? Or find ways to better regionalize services so that everybody has an ability to meet the needs of the particular individuals and a better fostering, a better understanding and a better partnership, Mr. Speaker? We have done that. We have done that because we have been able to bring the proper people together under the proper heading and the simple heading is let's do the right things. Let's do the right things under the auspices of the financial restrictions that we may have.

One day it will get better, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan. The Minister of Finance has a great plan. In five years we know where we are going to be. As we move, things will continue to move up. We will invest in different programs. We will modify the existing ones. The ones that have met their need, Mr. Speaker, will move on to whatever the priority is from that day. That priority will be set by the people of this Province.

I want to give a wholehearted thank you to the civil servants who particularly for years had to live on minimal increases, if any, at certain times and their standard of living would drop. We are there to continue supporting the government and now have been rewarded for it, and we will continue to be rewarded, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. BRAZIL: That is right; some previous Administrations were talking rollbacks. This Administration said we are here. We respect what you are doing. We will take care of you

one day. Mr. Speaker, we have managed to do that.

I do not want to talk about where we are in this Budget, Mr. Speaker, because everybody has already talked about it. Those who are in favour of it very diligently outlined what we are doing very passionately because they believe in it. Those who are opposed to it have politically postured for that reason to say we are doing things wrong.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. BRAZIL: That is right.

The general public know we are passionate about what we want to do because we are the same people who live in the same neighbourhoods. My kids went to the same schools as every other kid in the neighbourhood. They go to the same post-secondary education things. They go to the same arenas. They travel on the same roads. We do all the same things everybody in our own family.

We have the same vested interest as any other citizen, so there is no hidden agenda. If there is an agenda, the agenda is to do the right thing for the right people at the right time, and that is what this Budget does. The right time now is, under restraint, we are doing the things that minimize impact on people and still make sure that we move things forward, Mr. Speaker. We are doing that, very much so; I am very proud to be a part of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, what I want to touch on as we talk about the Budget process because it might be the last time I get to speak on this Budget, particularly, because it is an election year so who knows where destiny will take us down the road.

AN HON. MEMBER: You could be Finance Minister next year.

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, I could be Finance Minister so I will get that four-and-a-half hours as the present Finance Minister did, and did a wonderful job on it. There was nobody left at the end of the day not understanding exactly

what we were presenting to the people. There was nothing hidden in that Budget, Mr. Speaker. It was all out in the open because that is what it was about: transparency.

Do you want to know what we are doing for post-secondary? Here are the wonderful things we are doing for post-secondary? Do you want to know some of the challenges we have in post-secondary? Here are the things around post-secondary. Do you want to talk about where we are going to invest money in infrastructure? The minister outlined that. Do you want to talk about what we are doing for business? He outlined that. Do you want to talk about how we are going to drive the economy? He talked about that.

Mr. Speaker, it was all laid on the table for people to see and for the Opposition to tear apart if that is indeed what they wanted to do. I give credit; some members of the Opposition did note some of the good programs and services that we did and did note some of the good programs and services that we put out there, and we acknowledge that. There is no doubt about it; there were a lot of good things announced. There are still a lot of good strategies moving forward.

I want to go back a few Budgets ago; I want to go back to this Administration to tell us how we got to this point. I say how we got to this point, how we got to a point where our revenues are down – no fault of ours, Mr. Speaker. It is what it is. We are the stewards, we accept that, we understand that, but no fault of ours because it is an international issue for everybody and we are trying to work through that. How we got to the point to have our revenues down substantially and still be able to offer a Budget for the people of this Province that minimizes impact on them, does not alter their lifestyle, it offers hope, and it offers some vision there, it offers a plan of where we are going to be in the future.

I have not heard plans from anybody else, Mr. Speaker; I am going to tell you that right now. I have not heard them, not a plan whatsoever. I heard a plan about a plan that there might be a plan down the road when they are ready to put the plan out, but I do not know what it is. I do not know what it stands for. One thing about this side of it, when we get up and speak,

whether you like it or not – and there is no doubt, what we do here is not always perfect, but we do have it out. It is out there for people. They understand what it is. If they want to tear it apart, if they want to question it, if they want clarification, if they want to understand it, without a doubt it is all visible, it is all transparent, and it is all available for people. That is one good thing about what we have in this Administration, Mr. Speaker, and that is where we are.

I want to talk a little bit about how we got to this point, how we got to the point of having to come up with a billion dollars and managing to be able to do those things without having a major impact on people's lives. That is because for the last ten years, Mr. Speaker, we have developed programs and services. We have engaged people out there to tell us how to do it. We have partnered, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at the municipalities, we have partnered with more municipalities in the last ten years and developed ongoing partnerships. They are just not one-offs, Mr. Speaker, they are ongoing. At any given time there are municipalities coming in to meet with my department and other line departments to talk about, how do we continue to do the things we are doing? How do we continue to partner on roads? How do we continue to partner on recreation programs, on infrastructure programs? How do we continue to improve regional services?

I have the privilege this week now, I will be meeting with the Joint Councils of the Northeast Avalon but particularly on the northern part of Cape St. Francis and Portugal Cove – St. Phillips. Mr. Speaker, it is a new awakening there. They like the fact that in the last number of years we are open to talking about, how do we better service each other? We fostered that co-operation between municipalities, between organizations out there, Mr. Speaker. We have done that.

Look at all the youth organizations we have helped develop, the community youth networks. Look at some of the great work that is being done by them from Nain, Labrador, where we have sites, to over in Harbour Grace, to here in St. John's with Thrive St. John's, and the Street

Reach programs, and Choices for Youth. These are all programs that over the years we have supported.

We did not just throw a bulk of money at them. What we did was partner with them. They came up with ideas and initiatives that made sense, that engage other partners. Because of the partnerships we have helped to develop, I would say we delivered and have been able to co-operate on hundreds of millions of dollars from federal funding, from private sector funding.

This Administration right now has more partnerships with the corporate world, giving to social programs and social services. It is not just about a business plan. This is about social programs being supported by the business community, because we have put programs and services in place and developed partnerships. We have connected the social programs with the business industry, and businesses have bought into that.

When they came into this Province we said you are coming in as a partner. Well, you do not just partner on the revenue generating part of it. You partner on the whole social part of it, and they have done that, Mr. Speaker. As a result, we have a better society here.

Look at the oil companies here, the construction companies, the pharmaceutical companies. All these companies realize that if you are going to be part and parcel of Newfoundland and Labrador and you want to develop a partnership and you want to flourish here, you have to give back to the communities, and they have done it.

As I said about the people on this side and our families, and the same people over there, their families live in the same communities. They attend the same schools. They do the same things in recreation. They want their society to be safe, they want it to be engaging, and they want it to flourish. They want everybody to have the same opportunities, Mr. Speaker, and we have done a great job at that. Is there much more to do? Of course there is, Mr. Speaker, of course there is.

Would this be a great utopia if everything was perfect? Of course. Will we ever get to that position? Probably not, but I guarantee you,

under this Administration everyday things get better. It is lighter at the end of the tunnel every day because we have a plan. We have a strategy, Mr. Speaker. That strategy is about the people of this Province and meeting their needs and making sure, at the end of the day, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are better off tomorrow than they are today. We have that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to stand again. This is my second time speaking to this year's Budget.

I want to raise a couple of issues. We have had speaker after speaker after speaker on the other side basically stand and say, it wasn't our fault. It was the world price of oil. That is what did it. That is the reason we are in the situation we are in. We could not control that. It was out of our control, Mr. Speaker.

Many would argue with that, and the reality is – we all know David Cochrane, the CBC reporter, he has hit on us as well and hit on government. I would say he is generally a fair journalist, but I want to talk a little bit about one of the articles he wrote regarding the Budget. He said, “The Progressive Conservatives were having a pretty good budget week, right up until they got to budget day. The government used a series of pre-budget announcements to set the news agenda”

We all remember that. I was starting to think they blew this whole Budget thing out of proportion saying it is going to be a tough Budget, because they had announcement after announcement after announcement leading up to the Budget that sort of softened the Budget a little bit, or tried to soften the Budget.

“But on budget day, an endless series of grim numbers took over the news agenda, telling a story of financial hardship that most people thought was in the past.” Now, we will keep in mind that the government opposite had a decade

of this Province's greatest wealth, a decade of the greatest wealth this Province has ever experienced. I do not know if we will ever see that sort of decade again. I hope we will. There is lots more oil out there. I am hoping there will be other discoveries of oil that will keep this Province in the oil business for decades and decades.

We did experience the greatest decade of wealth that this Province had ever experienced, \$20 billion in oil royalties, and on top of that another \$5 billion in Atlantic Accord revenues. I am not sure about the \$2 billion cheque, whether that is included in the \$25 billion or not, but I will talk a little bit about the \$2 billion cheque. We all remember the celebration. All of us, every one of us in the House, me included, thought that was \$2 billion that government arm wrestled out of the federal government.

No, no, Mr. Speaker. We are now starting to see the real picture. That was in trade-off for five years of the Atlantic Accord. We were supposed to get royalties under the Atlantic Accord –

MR. WISEMAN: (Inaudible).

MR. OSBORNE: I say to the Finance minister who is over yapping, he had hours of speaking on this Budget and he is going to get an opportunity to stand and speak on this Budget again, but the Finance minister seems to feel he has the right to have the floor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: I am on my feet, I say to the Finance minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: He is a cracky, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: He has no right to try to take my time when I am on my feet. He will have an opportunity to get on his feet again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we all remember the \$2 billion. Mr. Speaker, the reality is, and nobody –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) Cabinet table.

MR. OSBORNE: I agree, I was at the Cabinet table. Nobody, even at the Cabinet table, Mr. Speaker, nobody was told the truth when that \$2 billion cheque was brought home from Ottawa. None of us were told that was a trade-off of five years of Atlantic Accord. None of us were told. None of us were told, Mr. Speaker, that we traded off – instead of getting twenty years of equalization payments –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: – equalization payments for twenty years, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask you to intervene and ask the Minister of Finance to –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Chair has recognized the Member for St. John's South. I would ask other hon. members to keep their comments to themselves, please.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WISEMAN: (Inaudible) the Cameron Inquiry.

MR. OSBORNE: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, and I will be glad to talk about the Cameron Inquiry any time at all that the Minister of Finance wants to challenge me on the Cameron Inquiry, because he knows the details of that and so do I.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I will say to each and every member over there that I have acted professionally on this side. I know where all the closet doors are and I know where all the skeletons are, I say to the Minister of Finance. So do you want to talk about the Cameron Inquiry? I will talk.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: I will talk, and lots more.

Now, Mr. Speaker, back to the \$2 billion. We had twenty years of equalization we were supposed to get under the Atlantic Accord arrangement, but we did not get twenty years, we got fifteen. Because the \$2 billion was the trade-off, the last five years of the Atlantic Accord.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the \$25 billion we got in oil royalties and Atlantic Accord combined includes that \$2 billion or not. The reality is we got \$25 billion over the past decade. Do you know what? We hear from government that there was \$6 billion spent in infrastructure. Well, that still means another \$19 billion.

They talk about propping up some of the pension plans. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a whole lot more money out of that \$25 billion that should have put this Province in good stead. It should have had this Province able to weather the storm when oil prices went down.

The reality is we have had oil prices where they are today over the past decade, but the Province still experienced great wealth. The reality is we have seen the oil prices where they are today since 2003, but we still have experienced over that time period, because we were in the decade of greatest wealth this Province has ever, ever experienced. Mr. Speaker, it is a different story today.

The article goes on to say, "... the largest deficit in the province's history." Can you imagine after a decade of unprecedented wealth to have the largest deficit in the Province's history? "After a decade of unprecedented revenue growth this budget raises fees, hikes taxes,

grows the debt and projects the largest deficit in the province's history. Less than two years after former Premier Tom Marshall referred to Newfoundland and Labrador as being in a 'golden age,' the province is facing five straight years of real GDP decline and projecting net job losses until 2019." On top of that, "From the premier on down, the Tories have blamed all of this on the sudden plummet in oil prices and other commodities that have stripped more than a billion dollars out of the government's revenue streams."

Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say: conveniently the members opposite ignore the fact that government's own spending has played a part in their current fiscal misfortune. That is the reality. It has been government's spending and their lack of ability to plan, their lack of ability to save and put money aside in a heritage fund. The only ability when oil royalties and other royalties were rolling into this Province in unprecedented numbers was the ability to spend. Any time a problem came up, out came the chequebook and the problem went away. Well, there was a lack of planning, and that in large part has led to where this Province is today.

When the money seemed endless is the next part of this media story. It all seemed good when oil was in triple digits. Government's thinking got soft when the economy was booming and money seemed endless. That, in a nutshell, is why the Province is in the situation it is in today.

Now, it is easy enough for members opposite to say it is us who are saying that, but it is also the media. Most people you speak to on street corners or walking through the malls or anywhere else you see them will say they cannot believe, after a decade of unprecedented wealth, that this Province is in the situation that it is in today.

Mr. Speaker, twelve years after winning power, government is forced to raise taxes and run record deficits and they are projecting deficits for the next five years. They have projected that in their road plan to prosperity. Five years of deficits in their road map to prosperity.

AN HON. MEMBER: It does not take public sector wages into account.

MR. OSBORNE: It does not take public sector wages into account; that is a fact.

Mr. Speaker, I remember 2010, most people will remember – even though two years ago former Premier Marshall said the Province was in a golden age. I remember in 2010, five years ago, when the former Premier Marshall was Finance Minister at that time and he was doing his Budget consultations around the Province. We remember the ticker and so on that the former Premier, former Minister of Finance had. In 2010 I remember Minister Marshall advising that oil royalties were in decline. In 2010 he said oil royalties were in decline and would continue that way for some time.

Now, those are the words of Minister Marshall in 2010, but today it is not our fault. This decline in oil royalties was unexpected. We did not see it coming. That is what members opposite would have you believe, but if you look at some of the quotes from Minister Marshall in 2010, they knew that oil production was in decline. They knew that oil royalties were in decline, Mr. Speaker. They have had five years and they did not do anything to find efficiencies. They did not do anything to find efficiencies since those quotes and comments of 2010.

Mr. Speaker, they did not have the ability to plan, they did not have the ability to put a plan in place five years ago, but today will say they have a five-year plan. They have a five-year plan, eight pillars. In five years, they promise to make things better. Forgive us for the mistakes we have made – yes, we have made a few, but give us another chance; we will set the record straight. Well, Mr. Speaker, you do not judge a government who has been in power for twelve years on what they are promising to do; you judge that government on what they have done. You judge them on what they have done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: That is what you judge them on, Mr. Speaker.

The best way to tell the actions of a government who has been in power for twelve years is not on what they promise to do, but on their track record, on what they have done. Their track record has not been one of setting out a five-year

plan. We know that, because in 2010 they had an opportunity to plan the next five years. When Minister Marshall said oil royalties are in decline and that is the way they are going to be for some time, they had an opportunity to plan five years then; but no, government said forgive us, we have made some mistakes, but we have the plan. We are going to do it better this time. Give us another chance.

Well, Mr. Speaker, soon enough the people of the Province will speak their mind. They will have an opportunity to cast judgement on whether or not government has managed the Province properly for the past twelve years. We all know what we are hearing in the streets; we all know that. Government, I would suspect, are doing their polling. I know they are because that is the way governments operate. They do polling to find out what public opinion is on this issue or on that issue, find out how much the general public like them, and what direction should they take, what they should do, how they should handle a particular issue.

They have been doing it for years, so they know what public opinion is like. We have seen it for the past couple of years where government who were topping the polls a few years ago have spiraled. They have lost the confidence of the people, and that is the reality. I am not saying that to be cocky. I am not saying that to blow a horn. I am saying that, Mr. Speaker, because we are hearing it everywhere we go.

All you need to do is look at the ferry contracts on the Fogo-Change Islands ferries and the Bell Island ferry, and the \$25 million in tariffs government are going to have to pay because they did not pick a North American company whose bid was almost the same as the European company. There are no tariffs on North American companies.

Government will try to convince you, do you know what, this company is better, they will do a better job; but they have never built a vessel for our waters. The company they overlooked, that would have been \$25.5 million cheaper, Mr. Speaker, has built vessels for waters in Newfoundland and Labrador, and they are proven.

I am not trying to slander the other company but what I am saying is government says the people of the Province are getting their monies worth; they are paying \$25.5 million more for ferries that government presented the plans on, presented the specs on and whatever company built those vessels would have to build them according to government specs.

That is not good planning. We saw it on Humber Valley Paving, Mr. Speaker, where government were very quick to forgive the bonds, release the bonds, because they did not want to hurt the company. There are lots of companies throughout this Province that were hurt because the bonds were forgiven, and now have to take court action if they want to get their money back instead of applying towards a bond.

We all know the history on why that happened. We all know why those bonds were forgiven. Is that good planning in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? We all know of the promises – and government are promising a five-year plan, a road to prosperity; but no, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe it and most people do not because government promised a new courthouse for St. John's. Guess what? That is on hold. It is not cancelled because government does not want to say we broke our promise. Oh, that is on hold, indefinitely, but at some point we are going to come back and do it again.

A courthouse for Stephenville – what happened there? That is on hold. Government promised it. Do you know what? We are going to put that on hold, indefinitely, but we promise we are going to do it again at some other point.

The Waterford Hospital was another promise. What happened? This year the promise is on hold. How long? We cannot tell you – indefinitely, but we will come back again and do that because we promised. Well, they already promised it but they are promising the promise again.

The Corner Brook hospital was promised for the first time in 2007. It was promised during the election of 2007. It was promised every year from 2007 to 2011 and promised again in the election in 2011. The by-election out there, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier resigned in Humber

East, it was promised in the by-election when the other Premier resigned in Humber West. Because let's remember, since 2011 we had three-and-a-half Premiers.

So, it was promised. Guess what? They are still promising. The people of Corner Brook do not believe that promise because they are still promising the hospital they have been promising for seven or eight years. They have a nice lot leveled out there. They have moved the sign, I think, two or three times. Mr. Speaker, there is still no hospital and no sign of a hospital, but it is promised. Just like the five-year road to prosperity, it is promised.

A new penitentiary – what happened to that? They are promising to revisit that again.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before we adjourn, I just want to remind the House that the Estimates for Education and Early Childhood Development will met tonight in the Legislature at 6:00 o'clock.

On the note, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

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