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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 am pleased to welcome to our gallery this afternoon Matthew Piercey, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Cancer Society, Newfoundland and Labrador Division. As well as Angela Noseworthy, Manager of Community Services for Daffodil Place.

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 Bellevue, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Baie Verte – Springdale, St. George's – Stephenville East, St. John's Centre, and Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

The hon. the Member for the District of Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the 2903 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps of Norman's Cove-Long Cove on their Annual Ceremonial Review on Sunday, May 31, 2015. I had the honour of being a reviewing officer. With their boots shining, suits well pressed and posture at its best, I did not have an easy job.

This review is the highlight of the year where cadets display their achievements from the past year to friends, family and their peers. It is the knowledge, confidence and self-esteem that you build through being a cadet that helps you in future actions.

The Cadet Corps is sponsored by the Norman's Cove-Long Cove town council and this was the forty-third annual review. I want to recognize the founders of the Cadet Corps: Wilson Callan, Gilbert Newhook, Hayward Smith, and William Blundon.

Today the Corps has thirty members and five officers. It is the great leadership of CO Ann Mercer and four other officers who makes this Corps a success each year.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the 2903 Royal Canadian Army Cadets on another wonderful year of success in the cadet movement.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate the 2922 Vimy Ridge Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps of Bay d'Espoir for the success of their Annual Ceremonial Review, which I had the pleasure of attending on May 24th. I thoroughly enjoyed the day and commend you all for the great pride and effort you put into your presentations.

Today, it is a pleasure to pay tribute to the following award recipients: Best Green Star went to Cadet Nathan Manuel; Best Red Star, Corporal Coady Inkpen; Best Silver Star, Corporal Bianca Stokes; Best Gold Star, RSM Parker Nugent, who also demonstrated great skill as the parade commander; Peer Choice was awarded to Master Corporal Melanie Collier; CO Choice, Lance Corporal Kendra Hoskins; Best Dressed Cadet on Parade was Corporal Coady Inkpen; and Citizenship Award went to Corporal Bianca Stokes. I also commend Corporal Bianca Stokes, Corporal Coady Inkpen, and Cadet Christian Snook for their perfect attendance. Congratulations also to all fifteen of these fine young men and women on their rank positions.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the 2922 Vimy Ridge Cadets for your tremendous dedication, and hope you all continue to enjoy the countless rewarding experiences and lifelong friendships the corps has to offer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Son of Peter and Delores Young of Springdale, Indian River High School student Riley Young, captured the coveted Mayor's Cup during the Midget E Easter Minor Hockey Championships.

The Mayor's Cup is awarded to a Springdale player who excels at the tournament, displaying all the ingredients of a true team player. Hosted by Springdale, Riley's goal scoring ability propelled his team to a bronze medal finish.

Die hard hockey fans and supportive parents and grandparents were treated to some very exciting and tense moments as all the teams gave it their best shot.

Displaying not only outstanding sportsmanship, but also sheer grit, determination, and superior hockey sense, Riley made his parents, teammates, and the entire community extremely proud. His tenacity, hard work, and positive attitude was exemplary. Not only is Riley a dedicated player, but he is also extensively involved in high school sports while maintaining a 90-plus average.

In addition, he volunteered his time, talent, and energy in church activities and community events. His dream is to work in sports journalism and to see the Leafs the Stanley Cup.

Honourable colleagues, Riley Young of Springdale, the Mayor's Cup recipient.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) St. Barbe.

MR. SPEAKER: I do not have the Member for St. Barbe on the list.

MR. J. BENNETT: Replacing the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

MR. SPEAKER: Was the statement passed in, in advance?

MR. J. BENNETT: Yes, it was, days ago.

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

MR. J. BENNETT: The takeCHARGE of Your Town initiative started in 2010 and its goal is to encourage residents and municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador to reduce their energy use.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. J. BENNETT: Following over thirty submissions from towns across Newfoundland and Labrador for 2014, two winners were selected to receive a grant of \$7,500. One was Port au Choix in the District of St. Barbe, specifically the Twin Town Sports Complex.

The Twin Town Sports Complex will be adding controls on heaters and pumps that will save energy and save money. It will also provide a model for the region that other residents, organizations, and businesses will use to increase their energy efficiency.

The Twin Town Sports Complex does not benefit only those who use it, but the community and region as a whole. This facility generates activities and attracts people to the area, making a huge contribution to the local economy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating the Town of Port au Choix Twin Town Sports Complex on winning the takeCHARGE of Your Town initiative and the grant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am honoured today to recognize a vital institution in my District of St. John's Centre, a home away from home for people fighting the biggest battle of their lives. Daffodil Place opened its doors in 2009. The fine people at the Canadian Cancer Society recognized people coming to St. John's for cancer treatment often face the additional struggle to pay for accommodations and food while they were here for weeks or months at a time.

The people of the Province responded and today Daffodil Place serves 351 communities. Since 2009, 3,526 guests have stayed. The occupancy rate is in the high nineties and there is almost always a waiting list. The Cancer Society does all this through ongoing massive fundraising efforts. Overall, their programs focus on physical activity and helping patients take control of their own recovery.

The fantastic Defy Cancer Program helps people transfer back into the community when treatments are finished. A grief therapy program gives end-of-life care. Folks undergoing cancer treatment get three meals a day, drives to appointments, and emotional and practical supports like wigs and temporary prostheses. This is community at its best, Mr. Speaker.

To the wonderful folks at Daffodil Place, their army of volunteers, and everyone who donates, bravo and thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Melissa O'Keefe of Carbonear who recently joined the Carbonear Volunteer Fire Department. Why is that so special you may ask? Melissa becomes the first female member of the Carbonear Volunteer Fire Department in twenty years, and only the second female in the department since its incorporation in 1841.

Melissa, a twenty-nine-year-old mother of one son, Ethan, graduated from Carbonear Collegiate in 2003 and may have been inspired to pursue a career in firefighting from her aunt, Sonia

Williams, who is the former Chief of the Harbour Grace Fire Department and a twenty-year member for the department.

Melissa joined the fire department in November of last year and has been actively involved in training for her new volunteer role. She is one of the growing numbers of females joining volunteer fire departments across the Province. Of the over 6,000 volunteer firefighters in the Province today, approximately 6 per cent of them are female members, and that number is increasing year over year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Melissa O'Keefe as a member of the Carbonear Volunteer Fire Department and wish her a safe and rewarding career in firefighting.

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 rise today in this hon. House to celebrate the success of the Premier's Youth Advisory Committee's first face-to-face retreat. Last week, the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement and I had the opportunity to meet with twenty-one members of the Committee from throughout the Province. They met here in St. John's.

The Office of Public Engagement led the weekend's activities and reflections, which included exploring ways to collaborate and work more effectively together through public engagement. They discussed what it is like to work in the political system, and examined the Committee's role in the expansion of Bridge the gAPP, which is an app originally launched by Eastern Health earlier this year to help young people address critical issues such as stress, relationships, drug use, and suicide.

Mr. Speaker, our goal in reactivating the Youth Advisory Committee is to empower youth, and to recognize they have a voice. As we discovered through last weekend's events, the Committee is already engaged in ensuring the youth voice is heard in our Province.

For example, just days before the retreat, one of the committee members was a panelist on CBC Radio's Crosstalk. He spoke very eloquently about the importance of immigration, and how we all benefit from newcomers who view Newfoundland and Labrador just as passionately as the people who have lived here their entire lives. Other committee members are pushing the public discussion in areas connected to their efforts as part of a number of sub-committees, including the costs associated with education, career guidance and planning, and diversity awareness and inclusion.

Mr. Speaker, upon meeting the committee, what impressed me the most is how each member wants to know how they can collectively make a difference.

It speaks to the strength of this committee's convictions – and also to the calibre of the members – that various provincial government staff reached out to ask how they could incorporate a greater youth perspective in their work immediately following a presentation by these young people.

Mr. Speaker, as I referenced after meeting with the committee on Friday, this weekend retreat of twenty-one young Newfoundland and Labrador women and men was an opportunity to see first-hand the passion, intelligence and empathy of our youth. We will certainly be looking to this committee as a valuable source of insight as we create plans and initiatives for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Premier for the advance copy of his statement. Of course, we know that youth play an important role in shaping the future of our Province. They have ideas that need to be heard and used in the decision making of government.

The Youth Advisory Committee consists of youth sixteen to twenty-nine years old from all regions of the Province and it is important that they are provided the necessary resources to accomplish what they have been asked to do. When I see all of the members who have been chosen to serve on the committee, I can plainly see that the future of our Province is in good hands. They come with strong skills, impressive experience in volunteer work in their own communities and regions, and they come with a lot of energy.

I want to particularly recognize Raylene Mackey of the Goulds, who serves as one of our Pages in the House of Assembly and volunteers on over ten different organizations in our Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: I also notice that some of them are serving on municipal councils. I am sure we will see many of them in provincial politics in the very near future. Colin Corcoran as past Mayor of Riverhead, as an example; Mallary McGrath is a town councillor at Branch; and Donovan Taplin is a councillor in Wabana.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish the Youth Advisory Committee all the success in their deliberations and we look forward to their suggestions and their advice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the fantastic twenty-one young people who gather in good faith to improve the lives of young people in Newfoundland and Labrador. They know words are not enough. Government must commit to concrete solutions, real economic diversity so youth have a future in their own communities, a plan preventing and ending youth homelessness, and more school

counsellors so students can get help with career choices and mental health issues.

Government's reductions in jobs through attrition sends a message there is no room for youth in our public service. Cuts to MUN, signal to youth they are not a priority. If government really is committed to youth, real engagement should mean real change.

Bravo to the Youth Advisory Committee. We look forward to hearing more from them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to supporting families and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We also recognize there are many instances where families face a crisis. We are committed to supporting our Province's families through these difficult times as well. That is why we have implemented the Job-Protected Unpaid Leave Policy for the public service. This policy means the jobs of parents are protected if they need to take some leave to focus on their families in times of trying circumstances such as dealing with a critically ill child, or with a crime-related child death or a disappearance.

Mr. Speaker, these circumstances are unimaginable and ones that we hope no one ever has to face. In the unfortunate event though that a family is faced with these situations, this government wants to support families in this Province and alleviate the added stress of worrying about their employment. The Job-Protected Unpaid Leave Policy allows working parents to address the needs of their families, secure in the knowledge that their jobs are being protected.

The provisions of the Labour Standards Act are not binding to the Crown which necessitates the development of a stand-alone human resource

policy to ensure employment protection and job-protected, unpaid leave is extended to public service employees.

As a result, the new policy reflects the Labour Standards Act and creates the following two new job-protected, unpaid leave of absence options for the public service: the first one, critically ill child care leave, which provides up to thirty-seven weeks of unpaid leave for the parent of a critically ill child to provide care or support to that child; and secondly, a crime-related child death or disappearance leave, which provides up to fifty-two weeks of unpaid leave for the parent of a child who disappears as a result of a probable Criminal Code offence, and up to 104 weeks of unpaid leave for the parent of a child who dies as a result of a probable Criminal Code offence.

Mr. Speaker, the leave period will not be considered a break in service. Therefore, upon the return from unpaid leave, employees will not lose any benefits that had accrued at the commencement of the period of job-protected unpaid leave.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to supporting our employees and providing them with the assistance they need to address any of these family needs. Our vision for a prosperous Newfoundland and Labrador is demonstrated in our commitment and investments in the health and well-being of our children and families.

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 thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. Many of us in this House, through our own family experiences, or through the extended community that we participate in certainly understand all too well the issues that face a family when they are challenged with the critical illness of a child, or in some cases, the sad reality of a child that has been abducted or lost to a family.

Mr. Speaker, I can certainly say, as somebody who is celebrating her first anniversary here in the House, I was surprised to realize that government employees were not protected as part of the Labour Standards Act. I guess I am still learning about that, but I am very pleased to stand and support the minister's statement today. Many people in this House of Assembly have worked many hours, including my hon. colleague across the hall, on facilities that support families who are in crises. Providing home away from home, or even providing services is critical to those families.

Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to stand and join the minister in recognizing the importance of providing our public sector employees with the same protection that many of those individuals who work in the private sector now enjoy. No family, no parent, including the parents who are in this House of Assembly, want the information that their child is ill, and they certainly want the space and time to be able to serve the needs of their family and the needs of their children at the right time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy. I especially thank him because when the Labour Standards Act was changed in December 2013, we were delighted to speak to this legislative change that was happening across the country, both federally, and then because of federally, other jurisdictions, to provide job security for parents who take leave due to a child's critical illness or criminal disappearance or death.

We are surprised that it is nearly eighteen months later that government has developed a parallel policy applying to the public service. While it is better late than never, I hope that no one in the public service was disadvantaged in the interim when this job-protected leave was available to other employees, but not to them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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 am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the organizers of the OCEANS '14 international conference on their recent Destination St. John's Tourism Award for 2014 Convention of the Year.

From September 14 to 19, 2014 the annual Marine Technology Society/IEEE Ocean Engineering Society OCEANS Conference was held in St. John's. The conference featured world-renowned scientists and a wide variety of exhibitors from around the world.

Darrell O'Neill of the Ocean Technology and Arctic Opportunities branch of the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, and also serving as Chair of the Local Organizing Committee, accepted the Award of Distinction at a ceremony at City Hall last week.

Mr. Speaker, my department, together with ACOA, provided support for a dedicated Project Manager position, who worked with the Local Organizing Committee and the managing societies, to make this international conference a major success and one of the largest conferences ever held in our Province.

The department provided additional support to OCEANS '14 through the marketing branch, which developed various advertising campaigns, branding, and conference logo. The department was also strongly represented on the local steering committee.

Mr. Speaker, this recognition is a significant achievement. Officials in my department work diligently to execute the vision of Newfoundland and Labrador as a hub of knowledge, skill, and industry growth, to great success.

Mr. Speaker, the world now comes to us here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Our Province is

on the world stage, and is a desired location for international conferences. Yesterday in St. John's, the International Conference on Ocean, Offshore and Arctic Engineering opened and next year, in October, we are hosting the Arctic Technology Conference. This event is the world's most focused and comprehensive Arctic event.

Mr. Speaker, our ability to host first-rate international conferences is a testament to the successful partnerships formed between governments and industry.

OCEANS '14 brought international travellers to our shores, showcasing Newfoundland and Labrador as a centre of industry excellence. It also had the added benefit of economic spinoff for our local tourism and service sector.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Local Organizing Committee on this notable recognition from Destination St. John's.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I am pleased to join my colleague in congratulating the organizers of the OCEANS '14 conference on receiving the St. John's tourism award distinction convention of the year.

OCEANS '14 featured 1,800 participants and 150 exhibitors, and is said to be one of the largest industry conferences ever held in the city. Newfoundland and Labrador is an ideal site for such a convention, given its location in the harsh North Atlantic. Harsh environments are a challenge for the ocean technology sector, but as the convention slogan stated: challenge becomes opportunity.

Such conventions bring people from around the globe to our Province; therefore, critical to the tourism industry. Government has recently taken, however, steps backward in bolstering

tourism to our Province such as their decision to layoff product development staff on the West Coast and in Labrador, as well as a failure to persuade Marine Atlantic to keep our rates down on the ferries, given that we are down 30 per cent since 2002.

We have a long way to go yet, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today, and congratulations to all of the people involved in the OCEANS '14 international conference on a job well done. Congratulations, as well, on the award of Destination St. John's.

I think we are all pleased this Province is considered a centre for industry excellence. Our industry is based in one of the most hostile work environments on the planet and also one of the most biologically rich and diverse. That makes it all the more important.

I hope the government is also working on being a leader in the areas of environmental worker safety as well. Never has our environment been under so much pressure as what it has been these ten years, Mr. Speaker. I just hope the government will be ever vigilant to that fact.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was announced yesterday that Teekay Offshore resources would be taking over the shuttle tanker services for our offshore oil fields.

It is a fifteen-year contract that will see three existing oil tankers replaced by 2018.

I ask the Premier: Since the majority of the crew on these current tankers are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, what assurances do you have that these jobs will be filled by people of our Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, it was announced yesterday that Teekay has the new contract in the offshore. Today in *The Telegram* there is a half-page spread of their advertising jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Under the Cultural Trading Act, as well as under the Atlantic Accord Act, in full and fair opportunity, there are provisions there that the new vessels will be Canadian flagged and must be Canadian crewed. We have protection there, Mr. Speaker, and by all indications, Teekay will set up office here in St. John's as well and run their operations from here in St. John's.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the company only says that the current crew are the most welcomed to apply to any of the open positions. It does not say that the current crew will keep their jobs. They have the experience in this environment.

I ask the Premier: Do you have any commitment from the company that the current crew of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will keep their jobs?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, given the announcement yesterday, we have a meeting

planned with Teekay in the coming days. Again, to reiterate the fact that it is Canadian flagged and Canadian crewed. They are advertising out of our local paper today, Mr. Speaker. Looking to protect the jobs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will be of the utmost interest for us; but, as well, understanding and respecting the provisions under the Atlantic Accord Act with respect to full and fair opportunity.

Also, given the fact the experience and the work that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are currently doing in the offshore, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the people of this Province will have the opportunity to work on those tankers. We will certainly reiterate that when we meet with Teekay in the coming days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we also understand there are offshore exploration vessels tied up at St. John's Harbour waiting on the C-NLOPB to grant regulatory equivalencies. These vessels have been tied up for over a week due to the confusion on the federal transitional regulations.

I ask the Premier: How many of these vessels are contracted to Nalcor?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the transitional occupational health and safety guidelines from Transport Canada to some vessels working offshore, incidentally, seismic vessels, we have worked through the Labour Relations Agency, received requests in regard to exemptions to operate in regard to the amount of hours they are allowed to be expended in regard to workers on those vessels.

We have worked through some of those exemptions with the C-NLOPB. There are others that are with the regulatory arm of the C-NLOPB, with the safety officer down there. We continue to work through them and certainly hope to find a resolution to it very quickly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since these come with tremendous costs if these vessels are waiting for those regulations and those changes, I ask the minister: How many of those vessels are now contracted to Nalcor? This impacts directly to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. How many of those are contracted to Nalcor?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, what the leader is referring to is an extremely positive story. Despite what we are seeing in the global downturn in prices, the global industry, particularly around the seismic work that feeds into future opportunities and future developments, these companies are focused right in the offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a tremendous positive story.

In the latest round of bids, Mr. Speaker, ExxonMobil were successful with their partners. I understand that these vessels are primarily – it is my understanding that they are contracted to ExxonMobil to do their work as they proceed for the future.

Again it is a very positive story about significant investment, not only from major players in the industry, but also the companies that are out there looking for new opportunities. We are excited to have them here.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is no doubt that this could have a positive impact on Newfoundland and Labrador, but the positive impact is really more – we will see that more when these vessels are working. The cost of these vessels can be up to \$200,000 a day and they have been tied up for over a week. With a request for the regulatory equivalency made, the C-NLOPB posts the information for thirty days before making a decision.

I ask the Premier: Since this is causing unexpected delays, what impact will this have on Nalcor's exploration program and what are the additional costs associated with the delay?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the issue the Leader of the Opposition refers to is being worked on by the C-NLOPB and a company. We hope to get some resolutions and see some resolutions so that these vessels can get out and do the work that they are contracted to do.

Specific to any costs to Nalcor, Mr. Speaker, I would have to check and see. I do know they are contracted by ExxonMobil. There is multi-client work going to happen here. I will check and see if there are any costs to Nalcor and if there is, I will certainly report it back.

Once again I would like to reiterate the fact, Mr. Speaker, that this is very exciting for the Province. Despite a downturn, we are going to see some 3-D seismic work go on that is going to feed into tremendous opportunities for the people of the Province in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Last year, the Women's Policy Office underspent its budget by over \$1 million or 24 per cent.

I ask the Premier: How do you justify underspending this budget by over \$1 million, the price tag for two family violence prevention courts?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that the Violence Prevention Initiatives underway by the Women's Policy Office are significant projects, Mr. Speaker. They are important projects to the people of the Province as well.

Mr. Speaker, as you go through projects and you have timing on projects from time to time, there is more work or more analysis that needs to be done on them, and sometimes that moves it off of budget periods and move you through budget periods from one year to the next.

Not to lose focus on the Women's Policy Office and the important work that they do, because they have very strong relationships with groups representing women throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and they do great work on behalf of those groups and in partnership with those groups and for women in the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, government has been operating without a violence prevention action plan for three years now, and responsibility for the Status of Women has passed through five Cabinet ministers in the last year alone. This underspending speaks to the priority this government places on women's policy issues.

I ask the Premier: How do you justify a quarter of your budget last year being underspent? Is it a lack of leadership, or do you consider

improving the status of women and violence prevention a discretionary spending item?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, this is certainly not discretionary spending. It is very important investments and very important spending that takes place. As we have seen, some of the initiatives that have taken place are as a result of planning and work done that has been led by the Women's Policy Office in partnership with groups around the Province.

So for the member opposite to suggest that there is anything less than absolute importance to the Women's Policy Office – that is why we put it there, that is why we continue to support it, and that is why we have a Women's Policy Office in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last September, just one day before this Premier took office, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported small business confidence in Newfoundland and Labrador was the highest in the country. Now it is among the lowest. Government's failure to boost business confidence is obvious, and their planned HST increase will only make things worse.

So I ask the minister: How can you say the Budget is good for business development, when business owners disagree?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite is very much aware of the difficult financial and fiscal circumstances that face not only Newfoundland and Labrador, but other provinces and the country itself, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is we have created

a plan to work our way through a very challenging time – the same as we have done before. It is us over here who have the experience and the background, and demonstrated the good result of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – working through some very difficult times as a Province. The member opposite only needs to go back to 2008 and 2009 when Newfoundland and Labrador was the fastest Province to move through that turndown, and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – to be successful and come out even stronger and better when we turned that corner.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, eighteen months of consecutive job losses and raising the HST which is another job killer, is that a plan?

Mr. Speaker, the CFIB report also shows that only 13 per cent of small business owners plan to hire staff in the next three months, when this is supposed to be the hiring season. This is the lowest we have seen, post-recession, I say to the Premier.

I ask the minister: Besides their job-killing HST hike, what plans does this government have for small business in our Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard to sustain the very strong economy that we have built in Newfoundland and Labrador. The

member opposite only needs to look back in the past when there have been massive decisions made by government when they faced very difficult fiscal times.

Let's go back to the 1990s, Mr. Speaker, when members opposite laid off 2,000 people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: The member should look at what happened back in those days, Mr. Speaker, when businesses not only stopped hiring, they shut down and people left the Province and moved away. I tell you, we are going to make our best efforts to ensure that does not happen to Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are not laying off thousands of public servants like members opposite did, Mr. Speaker. We are going to stick with our public servants, we are going to stick with our economy, we are going to partner with business, and we will have a better tomorrow for our Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the College of the North Atlantic is currently in the process of moving programs from one campus to another and has, in some cases in the last few years, eliminated programs. The justification given in many cases is low enrolment.

I ask the minister responsible for post-secondary education: Is he aware of concerns about the lack of proper promotion of these programs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to tell you we are very proud of the work that the College of the North Atlantic has done here in this Province, Mr. Speaker, and also the education that they are providing for thousands

of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and also Canadians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, from time to time the College of the North Atlantic does make changes. They make changes to programs. They look at where the demand is in the market, what programs are in high demand, where our economy and where businesses in the Province need additional training and need additional students.

There are other places where there has been a substantial amount of training done and there is less of a demand, Mr. Speaker. We expect the College of the North Atlantic to roll with that, to adjust their programs, and deliver services that are in demand for our Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the concerns that are being raised is that the college is not being competitive enough in promoting their programs and that they are not participating in things like social media. Also, concerns have been raised that acceptance letters are not being received in a timely manner.

I ask the minister: Will he direct officials in his department to look into these deficiencies and, if necessary, address them, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: What I just heard the member opposite say is that the College of the North Atlantic is not investing enough in promoting the college and the courses and the programs. Mr. Speaker, a very interesting position for the members opposite to take, considering last week they criticized us for trying to draw attention and to bring people to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – government websites that are knowledgeable about what government services are available and what this year's Budget contains, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, they were criticizing we are spending too much on promotion; this week, they are saying we are not spending enough, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: The College of the North Atlantic, Mr. Speaker, does a great job in delivering very important programs and services to post-secondary students in Newfoundland and Labrador. They provide a good quality of programs. I tell you when students leave the College of the North Atlantic, they go on to long-term careers – many of them right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the concern here is that rather than spend money promoting programs at the college in a proper way, government is spending money on politically motivated self-promotion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: That is the problem here; it is the way that this money is being spent.

I want to ask the minister, the Premier, or whoever wants to answer: What are you going to do to address these concerns that people are raising about the promotion of programs at the college?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, to be clear, he has just reiterated once again that when we, as a government, promote what is contained in the Budget so we educate the people of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: We help to provide information to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador so they know –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – what is in the Budget and every time we have done anything publicly to talk about the Budget, we encourage people to go to our website, Mr. Speaker. We do it through –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Every time we have done it, we have directed people to the website where the Budget is so that they can peruse the Budget in detail and see the information.

Mr. Speaker, every day constituency assistants for members of this entire House of Assembly receive calls from constituents. Very frequently, one of the highest demand calls that constituency assistants receive is looking for information on programs and services. We are directing the people right to the website to help them understand better what is available for them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, there are over 150 tourism establishments across the Province operating without a licence. This week, being National Tourism Week, the industry has concerns for the safety of the patrons who are staying at these unlicensed tourism accommodations.

I ask the minister: What steps is this government taking to ensure the compliance of life safety regulations by operators with unlicensed accommodations?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, and I thank him for his question. It is important to make sure that regulations and standards are in place that provide quality services, Mr. Speaker, because we have more people coming to our Province than we have ever had before.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: We are heading into our tourism season. We know that bed and breakfasts and inns, tourist-based opportunities –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: They do not like to hear me talk over there, Mr. Speaker – tourism industry, people who are creating jobs, providing economic drivers for tourism, creating great opportunities for visitors to enjoy what our Province has to offer, and they are growing in leaps and bounds. We should ensure they are all properly registered. That they provide the standards and qualifications that they should have, and we are working hard to make sure that happens.

We have a growing industry, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, I am not questioning the great product we have in this Province and some great operators, but this is a life and safety issue.

Recently, three people were rescued from a fire at a hotel in Marystown, which was operating without a valid accommodations licence from government. Government is responsible for inspecting and licensing tourism establishments, including ensuring they have a complement with fire safety regulations.

I ask the minister: When will you begin enforcing your own regulations for the safety of its occupants?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, it is important that we have regulations, that we have standards. Standards and regulations quite often – it is not only about the quality of the product, but it is also about the safety of the individuals who utilize those services, if it be accommodations as the member opposite has referred to.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage anyone, and everyone in the Province, that anywhere they go, if they see a circumstance they do not believe is right or does not meet the requirements of legislation, pick up the phone and contact someone to make sure it can be looked after and checked into.

All tourism operators are fully aware, and I have talked to many of them –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – who believe they all need to share in responsibilities to ensure that life safety is always in place for people who are visiting and utilizing those services, Mr. Speaker, and also they work together to provide a better product. The higher the product that is provided, then the better reputation

Newfoundland and Labrador is going to have globally and the more visitors are going to come visit us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, section 67 of the Children and Youth Care and Protection Act says that youth needing protective intervention can sign a youth services agreement to get supports and funding from CYFS. If that youth was in custody or care of CYFS on their sixteenth birthday, they can receive supports until their twenty-first birthday. If they were not in care and custody of CYFS on their sixteenth birthday, they can receive supports only until their nineteenth birthday.

I ask the minister: Why does he provide supports to some youth until age twenty-one, but to others only until age nineteen when all of them are considered by his department to need protective intervention?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased to say over here that our government wanted to make sure that services, assistance, and supports to very vulnerable youth did not just end at the age of sixteen, Mr. Speaker. That is why we support the advancements of programs of youth beyond sixteen.

It is not that many years ago, Mr. Speaker, that when a young person reached the age of sixteen, they were no longer entitled to services from Child, Youth and Family Services. At the time it used to come under the health care authorities. We took the steps to create a stand-alone department to provide those services. We have advanced –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: We advanced those services to youth beyond sixteen. Yes, there are conditions, Mr. Speaker. I tell the member opposite, I know from my own personal experience that as a young person ages and passes the age of sixteen, it becomes much more difficult to ensure they stay within those programs.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I will ask the Premier the question again. I know the Finance Minister is not good at math and maybe the Premier is not good at ages.

Section 67 of the Children and Youth Care and Protection Act says that youth needing protective intervention can sign a youth services agreement to get supports and funding from CYFS. If that youth was in custody or care on their sixteenth birthday, they can receive supports until their twenty-first. If they were not in care and custody on their sixteenth birthday, they could only receive supports until their nineteenth birthday.

So the question is: Why does the Premier provide supports to some youth until age twenty-one but to others until age nineteen, when all of them are considered by his department to need protective intervention?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, to put it in perspective, what used to happen was when a young person turned sixteen, the services and programs that were available to them came to an abrupt end. It stopped happening.

What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is we now advance those services. So if a young person who is receiving care and support at the age of sixteen, and let's say, for example, they have a serious interest in furthering their education,

then those services will continue with that youth so they can continue to support their –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: It will support their efforts, Mr. Speaker, to continue with that education. Bringing that person right up to the age of twenty-one affords them an equal and beneficial opportunity to complete a post-secondary education as well, with grounded supports and assistance around them. That is why we changed it and provide better services than have ever been provided before (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, the question was about age discrimination between twenty-one year olds and nineteen year olds.

The question is: Why does this government provide supports to some youth until age twenty-one, but to others only until age nineteen, when all of them are considered by this government to need protective intervention? Why the discrimination?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I just referenced it, and I will reference it again for the benefit of the member opposite, because this is about children and youth who are –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – about children and youth who are receiving services, Mr. Speaker, from Child, Youth and Family Services. Instead of just cutting them off, like used to happen, it is a chance to continue with those programs and services so that youth can continue to benefit

from those services and programs, especially when they are engaged and they want those services.

Now, we see circumstances, Mr. Speaker, where sixteen or seventeen year olds do not want the services. They do not want to be engaged with government at that point in their lives. We cannot bring them into the program and force them to come in kicking and screaming. This is about those who want to continue in programs because they benefit, and it is paying off because more are graduating from school, going on to post-secondary education and getting careers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Clearly, the Premier, former Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, needs a briefing on the department that he used to be the minister of, because he does not seem to understand the question.

The question is: Why do you extend support services to some people until age twenty-one, whereas others can only receive the same support services until age nineteen, even though all of them are deemed to be in need of protective intervention?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: I am glad I get another chance to continue that discussion, Mr. Speaker, because –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

– because it is a very important and serious matter for this government. It was important enough that we took the steps to make those changes to ensure that people continue to receive

programs and services beyond the age of sixteen.

We have also seen times – again, I tried to tell this to the member opposite earlier. That I have seen cases as well where children and youth want to leave those programs. They leave those programs and services. They do not want to be there.

We know members opposite have shown a concern in the past about, well, why do you let them leave those programs? Members opposite have asked questions about it before. This is about continuing those supports. We have some great programs and partnerships. Choices for Youth is a great example of great work they are doing with youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Premier recently noted that minimum processing requirement cod exemptions given to OCI under a pilot project were to allow them the opportunity to find new markets and new mechanisms to build the industry.

I ask the Premier: Has the company provided information about the new markets that the exemptions enabled them to explore and, if so, can the Premier table it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to clarify as well – and the minister, I am sure, will provide further details for the member opposite momentarily. Minimum processing requirements are one of two jurisdictional authorities that we have as a Province and as a government here in the fishing industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: What we do is partner with businesses, we partner with industry to allow them to seek out new markets and new opportunities for our fishing industry, and they have proven to be very successful ventures in the past, Mr. Speaker.

It is a good opportunity, but what is important on MPRs is that we control the MPRs. Even though the federal government wanted us to give up MPRs as part of CETA, Mr. Speaker, we are not doing that. We are going to keep control of that for the best interests of our fishery and our people right here in the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am taking that as a no to my question.

Therefore, I ask the Premier: To what purpose did government grant these exemptions if no validating information is returned in exchange?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, we have had a great deal of discussion over the last little while with regard to MPRs, especially around OCI and the Fortune plant. We have worked diligently with the community of Fortune and the plant workers of Fortune. I met with union officials this morning and a union representative from the FFAW here in St. John's. Minimum processing requirements – last year we issued 500,000 pounds of cod exemptions in the Province, and only a small percentage of the MPR exemptions were used last year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, you ask any emergency responder and they will tell you that the new 911 service here in the Province is two-tier. There is a difference between a call taker and a dispatcher.

Why doesn't government recognize the failing of the Province-wide 911 system as it is at present, and fix it so that all have an equal dispatch service in the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member would know that he is being a little bit disingenuous in the way he has phrased his question in the preamble there. There is not a two-tiered system that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has implemented; in fact, there is a common 911 system for the entire Province, Mr. Speaker.

The member is referencing certain parts of the Province where municipalities have taken it upon themselves to enter into an arrangement to further enhance the service in their particular area. That is well within the right of municipalities throughout the Province, I say to the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, 911 as we deliver in this Province is generic and common to all people throughout all parts of the Province. As a matter of fact, as I have said a number of times before, government is now moving to the next stage to work on Next Generation 911.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, consumers want a 911 system in this Province; that, there is no doubt. They expect a system that uses dispatchers, not just call takers. There is a difference, and both the minister and the public know this. We cannot be fooled. The public cannot be fooled on this.

I ask the minister: If consumers are looking for immediate 911 dispatcher access, not call-taker access, shouldn't they get what they are paying for, for the seventy-five cents a phone line?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite that he has the luxury of standing on that side of the House every single day, as he does, and demand actions from this government on budgetary items – every single day. We have a list here in one of the drawers as long as your arm of the members from the Third Party demanding action every single day on budgetary items.

I say to the member opposite if you ever get the chance to sit on this side of the House, you will recognize very quickly that governments are constrained by the budgetary policies of government, Mr. Speaker. We made a Blue Book commitment several years ago to bring in 911 and we have met that commitment. As I have said a few moments ago, we have also made the commitment to work towards Next Generation 911. Very clearly, people in the Province are receiving what this government committed to, which was common, generic 911 service for the entire part of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS many parents have expressed concern about the impact of overcrowding at Beachy Cove Elementary on students' mental and physical well-being; and

WHEREAS many parents have questioned the impact of major space restrictions at Beachy Cove Elementary and the ability of the school to continue delivering quality curriculum in their growing student population; and

WHEREAS many parents have expressed concern about government's prolonged timelines to plan, tender, and construct the approved intermediate Grade 5-9 school in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to provide all the necessary resources in Budget 2015 and beyond to have the Portugal Cove-St. Phillips intermediate Grade 5-9 school constructed, commissioned, and operational for students in September 2016.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I suppose there are about another fifty or so signatures on this petition. I note the government issued a press release yesterday saying that the school is going to progress. Interestingly enough, we have another one of these schools purposely designed for expansion. I like to call them the rubber schools that the government is building. You just sort of stretch them out after a while and they will be big enough. Sort of like Beachy Cove Elementary has been, another school designed or built for expansion. It could be expanded by adding

modular classrooms in the parking lot and so on and so forth.

We will certainly be here. As long as I am here – let's put this way – in the House of Assembly I will be holding whichever government to account on this particular issue. I do not think a lot of people in our communities, whether it is Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, or Torbay, or Paradise and so on, believe the bill of goods they are being sold by this government, that somehow all these schools are going to be ready for 2016, no problem. As I said before, there are lots of instances where this government has built schools that are too small, they are too late, and basically too short of the promise that was originally made.

We still have lots of these petitions coming. People in the community are going to be holding the minister, the members in those areas, and this government to account for their commitments on these particular schools. We know that wherever kids live around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, they deserve to have the same level and the same quality of education as others.

One of the biggest concerns people have today is (a) whether or not these schools are going to be actually built, in place, constructed, commissioned and open for September 2016, and whether or not these expansions that they are talking about are something that are going to be needed immediately or something that is going to be relatively straightforward to do.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. KIRBY: 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 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 development 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 and 2015 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, eventually, at long last, most of the ice from this past winter seems to be gone. We still need to continue to talk about the need for this important study because the ice will come again, because that is where we live.

Mr. Speaker, the minister a few minutes ago talked about the people who get up on the Opposition and ask for things that have a big cost dollar value attached to it, but this is about vision. This is about planning. This is about are we going to continue to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in ferries while all around the world in places like Norway they are looking at models and they are looking at tunnels. The Minister of Finance the other day said he thought it was good. He thought it was a good idea for a fixed link, but the time was only coming now in the next ten years.

Just the other day in debate the Minister of Transportation said that I like to stand on my soapbox and I like to sound passionate. Mr. Speaker, I could not believe it. I have an obligation here on behalf of the people. Why would we lock ourselves into a ferry service for the next twenty-five years when we are clearly

going to continue to have the same kinds of problems?

We have an RFP that has been pulled off the table. We do not know when we are getting a new ferry. Ten years is enough to lock us into that, and then we need to be looking at a fixed link. We need to be doing a full, comprehensive feasibility study to see if in fact this is an option for the Strait of Belle Isle, or if it is not.

I will continue to stand and bring forward the concerns and the interests of the people who use the ferry from both sides of the Labrador Straits, and indeed around the rest of the Province.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that on behalf of the people whose petition I am reading.

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

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

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

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

I am very pleased to stand again, Mr. Speaker. These petitions have been coming in to me for a while. These signatures today are once again from Central Newfoundland. All of them, actually, are from Grand Falls-Windsor, people who are concerned because they are reading the reports that I have been referring to here in the House of Assembly when questioning the Premier. They are reading the reports that say privatization of long-term care is not working. Reports that are done on a number of levels, some of them are done with regard to the actual care of people in long-term care homes. We have one province, Saskatchewan in particular, where deaths of people in homes are being investigated.

The petitioners are also aware of the reports of Auditors General of at least three provinces, and I am aware of a fourth one, whereas it is being shown that it is actually not cost effective to have the private sector involved, that in actual fact it is more expensive. Very often the construction of facilities are costing more money than if they had been done under traditional contracts. As well, the type of care that is happening inside the homes is lower than that run by the public sector, by government. The main reason is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the private sector has to make money.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

Do I continue, or is that order for the floor?

MR. SPEAKER: You have another thirty seconds.

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi has another thirty seconds.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

The disruption of the floor, okay.

So, to say we do have a study showing that the care of people is also suffering. In Saskatchewan, deaths are being investigated. It is very disheartening for the petitioners and for me to hear government denying that these reports are there and refusing to recognize it. Other provinces know privatization of these services should not be happening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 tourism attraction in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde; and

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

WHEREAS the remains of this fire still exist along Route 80 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is my second opportunity to enter this petition, or a similar petition. It is interesting because I am entering it on behalf of the residents of Northern Bay, but when I look at the addresses of the people who signed this petition, it is people from all along Route 70: Ochre Pit Cove, Gull Island, Adam's Cove,

Western Bay, Bay de Verde, Burnt Point, Broad Cove, Victoria, Kelligrews, Cape Spear, Lower Island Cove, St. John's, and Job's Cove. Mr. Speaker, that is just to name a few on this petition of well over 100 signatures this afternoon of people who are concerned with the environmental mess, eyesore, and threat that exists today in Northern Bay.

Mr. Speaker, just last week the minister had his officials on site. We have not seen any concrete action yet of what is going to be done with this site. Tens of thousands of people visit Northern Bay Sands each and every summer. It is one of the largest tourism attractions in the district. These people come from all over the Avalon Peninsula and other parts of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, this has been an issue that has been raised by the people of Northern Bay with the previous member and they continue today to raise it with me. We are asking the Department of Environment to do this clean up as soon as possible. There is no need to put up with another tourism season of this eyesore directly across the entrance of Northern Bay Sands. It is simply not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I ask the minister to direct his officials to take the necessary action to have this property immediately cleaned up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Town of Conception Bay South is the second-largest municipality in the Province with a population of approximately 26,000 people; and

WHEREAS recent dangerous incidents on community streets have highlighted concerns of high speed and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: – inadequate traffic control in Conception Bay South; and

WHEREAS residents, organized groups and the town continue to raise awareness about pedestrian safety along main streets and the lack of police presence in Conception Bay South;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to review the level of policing in Conception Bay South with an objective to increasing police services and improving public safety.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is several times I have brought this petition forward. I know any number of groups within the town have taken this petition to be signed.

I first want to point out, as I have in the past, that in no way am I criticizing the work that the RNC currently does in our town. In fact, they continue to present themselves in a very professional manner as they go about their daily work. Mr. Speaker, I am more concerned, I guess, that the issue is tied more to the degree of policing and the perception of residents and the visibility of police in the community.

This petition came about to focus on the main issue that deals with speeding and dangerous driving on three highways that run through Conception Bay South: Route 60, Conception Bay South Bypass Road, and Foxtrap Access Road. It is only recently we have had several serious accidents on the Conception Bay South Bypass Road, for whatever reason, whether it is construction issues or, more of a concern, the speed and dangerous driving of people on that highway.

Mr. Speaker, I know recently the mayor has called for more police presence on that highway. It is not only on the highways. It is in the neighbourhoods as well. I know when I was growing up in Conception Bay South, we learned to ride our bikes on the street. We did

not have to go somewhere else. We did not have to ride them on sidewalks. We did not have to go to parking lots to learn to ride our bike. We rode our bikes on the streets.

Mr. Speaker, that is a concern today in that –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government has a responsibility to ensure that Internet access is broadly available so people have a right to be able to access the Internet in order to exercise and enjoy their rights to freedom of expression and opinion and other fundamental human rights; and

WHEREAS Bide Arm was bypassed under the Broadband and Rural and Northern Development Initiative, which saw high-speed Internet added to thirty-six communities on the Great Northern Peninsula in 2004; and

WHEREAS nearly a decade later, Bide Arm still remains without broadband services despite being an amalgamated town with Roddickton; and

WHEREAS residents rely on Internet services for education, business, communication, and social activity; and

WHEREAS wireless and wired technologies exist to provide broadband service to rural communities to replace slower dial-up service;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to assist providers to ensure Bide Arm is in receipt of

broadband Internet services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The petition is signed by residents of Bird Cove and Roddickton. Mr. Speaker, Bide Arm has a good business community there. When it comes to looking at expanding services and how you can promote and advertise, whether it be through James Randell & Sons Ltd. or D's Beauty World, or looking at the trucking companies that exist or the Western Newfoundland and Labrador Developers Co-operative that exists there, Ashton House, you talk about the ability to be able to connect with business and to thrive; you need the basic service of broadband Internet. It makes a lot of sense to offer that service.

If you talk about the industry, Bide Arm and Roddickton has been surrounded by forests and predominantly heavily involved in the forestry. If you do not have access to good telecommunications, then you cannot look at diversifying your economy and creating good jobs for the people in the region.

Government has really failed by not pursuing – after broadband one, two, and now the potential for broadband three – not to see a town, a municipality like Roddickton-Bide Arm to be able to fully have broadband Internet. It shows contempt. It shows disgrace. It is absolutely terrible that a Town of Roddickton-Bide Arm would not have broadband Internet in this day and age. I call upon the government to support this initiative.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: At this time I move, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, June 2, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker.

I move, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today, Tuesday, June 2, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to give notice to members that the Estimates for Executive Council as well as the Office of Public Engagement will be debated here in the House in Committee of the Whole this coming Thursday, which is June 4, I do believe.

With that, I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 3(a), Concurrence Motion to debate the Resource Committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Government House Leader – Concurrence Motion, which one?

MR. KING: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, on the Order Paper it is 3(a), the Resource Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Resource Committee.

The motion is that the report of the Resource Committee be concurred in.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I would just like to say it has been three-and-a-half years of standing in the hon. Chamber. Like the Member for Bay Verte – Springdale said the other day, you are still pinching yourself to realize that you are living the dream. You are still here and having the privilege to be able to stand to represent people when you stand up to speak.

I also realize, Mr. Speaker, mentioning that three-and-a-half years – first when we came into the House in the spring of that year, the Government House Leader read the names of the members who would be on different committees. I suppose I had a little bit of knowledge, and I heard my name read to be on the Public Accounts Committee. Then I relaxed and said, oh, I am on the Public Accounts Committee. I sat back and relaxed. Then all of a sudden, a few short minutes later, he said the Member for Bonavista North is also on the Resource Committee. I sort of did a double beat then because I did not realize what that was precisely.

It is probably only when you do get into the Estimates committees on the Budget that you understand and get a chance to be able to pay attention, to study what is happening when the minister comes into the House with all kinds of officials from his department, the actual Resource Committee, or other committees.

There are three committees altogether, Mr. Speaker, and they meet after hours, or before hours on Parliamentary days. They meet for three hours, and the members of the committee – generally it is the Official Opposition and the

Third Party. Even though there are members named to the committee from the Opposition, usually the Opposition members substitute in, into their critic areas. If Advanced Education and Skills is up, then you are sure the lead person who is asking questions on that day would be the critic for Advanced Education and Skills, and so on throughout the Estimates meetings.

Also from that, Mr. Speaker, you understand and you realize each and every line. We get a huge book – I would hold it up but I am not into that part of the prop. It is a book that is 300 to 400 pages long and it has every single item of expenditure that the government would spend money on in the current year.

It also has a list, Mr. Speaker, of what the government spent in the last year in the revised estimate. You have a plan. At the end of the year you will either spend more or spend less. So the second number is listed there for the members to observe, and then the current year's spending.

Many of the questions coming in are eagerly there to say, well, you planned to spend this much last year, you actually spent this much more or this much less, why is your number like it is for this year? That is an example, Mr. Speaker, of many of the questions that come forward.

Again, it gives a prime example of how scrutiny can go into the documents that follow the Budget. Right now we are in the point of – this current year, I had the opportunity to not only sit on the Resource Committee, but I chaired the Committee. I sat at the table and directed the activity of the Committee as it went.

Mr. Speaker, I have to report now on the activity of the Resource Committee for this year. Most of the comments I will probably make in the next few minutes will be related to that. Then I will have a few general comments at the end about how certain parts of the Budget fit, not only the Resource Committee, but all parts of all committees as they have met. As I said, it has been four years now, so the situation is there. I was happy to, like I said, control the flow of the questions that went back and forth this year.

Another thing I would like to let the people know is that Hansard records all of this activity. Any member of the general public can request a copy of Hansard and they can see the actual activity that happens. It is not televised, but it is recorded, and copies are available for anybody there.

You will also notice, Mr. Speaker, the departments. The departments that fit into this category – first I probably should tell you who was actually sitting on the Committee. I will find that in a minute. It eludes me right now but we will fit this through.

The different departments that fit into this aspect of the resource sector, Mr. Speaker, are Advanced Education and Skills, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Forestry and Agrifoods, Environment and Conservation as well as the Office of Climate Change, and Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. If you had noticed the theme through all five of these departments of government is they are all connected with the resource sector. That is hence the name of this Committee, the Resource Estimates Committee.

If you look at the entire Budget as it is spent, Mr. Speaker, and the \$8.1 billion investment or expenditures that will happen this year in our Budget, approximately 25 per cent – 27 per cent, I believe – of the entire expenditure of government is expended in the resource sector. The largest of the three sectors of the Estimates committees would be the social sector. Obviously, that includes health and education. Therefore, it takes up about 56 per cent of the entire expenditures of government. It has probably many more departments as well that fit in there.

In the resource sector, if we just look at the breakdown – I want to sort of outline the breakdown of expenditures per different department as it fits. If you realize in an \$8.1 billion Budget, about \$800 million is about 10 per cent of that Budget. So Advanced Education and Skills has a total expenditure of \$879 million. That is slightly more than 10 per cent of the entire budgetary spending.

Natural Resources, the second largest of the departments that we scrutinize, has an

expenditure of \$795 million. Again, that is approximately 10 per cent.

Some other departments, although they are very important in the scheme of things for our entire Province and how things go, Mr. Speaker, departments like Environment and Conservation spent \$27 million in total for the administration of the office and some of the programs that are carried out by that department. So that is far less than 10 per cent. In fact, it is only about 3 per cent of the entire Budget. So you can imagine where some of this fits.

Forestry and Agrifoods, the expenditure is just shy of \$70 million. Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development has about \$130 million-plus of expenditure. Fisheries and Aquaculture takes up about \$23 million of the expenditure.

I alluded to Advanced Education and Skills and all the resource sector. Just for people in the general public to think about some of the aspects of Advanced Education and Skills and how that fits to, why would it command such an amount of the budgetary expenditure? Well, when we were in Estimates, one of the notes I wrote down at the chair as I was talking, is when the minister was sat at the desk here, one of the first questions he was asked in opening comments, he said: I would really like to think this is the department of the government that helps citizens. There is 10 per cent of the Budget there that is set up for that.

So, basically, AES ensures that Newfoundland and Labrador has highly educated grads and skilled workers. Part of that is through the complement of the supports that are put in place, Mr. Speaker. Post-secondary education, obviously, we know that Memorial University takes the bulk of what is expended in post-secondary education. It has the most dollars there.

The College of the North Atlantic is to make sure that we are developing trades, Mr. Speaker, that fit the needs of our future workforce and the college applicants that come in. Student Aid is a part of this, apprenticeship development programs, career development and training supports, and then assisting communities, whether it be through disasters or problems in industry, where industries are on a downturn and

the Department of Advanced Education and Skills move in and assess the needs and the supports that are necessary to support the community through its rough times, to offer counselling services, to retrain people, and assistance programs for that, as well as the disaster relief programs that may be offered. So that is an area that covers a vast amount. A lot of questions came through all the different varying stages of how we deliver the funds in these categories.

Environment and Conservation: Given the need to protect and enhance our environment, it talks about management of biodiversity, all of the endangered species, wildlife, inland fish, water, and climate change. The Office of Climate Change was a portion of that Estimates. We also look at the control of pollution, again, through water resource policies, impact assessments, industrial emissions, waste disposal – and waste disposal took up probably the most of the time that was allotted there. Again, it got into not only budget line items, but it was a quite a vast amount of debate, basically, or opinions or questions – probing questions that led to more policy topics as I went through.

Also covering Environment and Conservation is regulatory protection of inland fish and wildlife, as well as provincial parks, wilderness reserves, and these areas. So, there is a vast degree of information that flowed through there.

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture – the minister and his officials came in and, of course, they are given the care of extracting the optimal sustainable benefit of fisheries and aquaculture for our entire Province, Mr. Speaker. Although when you look at it and say well, our fishery is a billion-dollar industry, we do not spend the billion dollars in fishery, but most of what we do spend is there for the administration and planning and programming and research in our fishery.

Research and development takes a fair amount of that. I guess the profit of some of the research and development that went into our fishery, after the moratorium from some twenty years ago, is our study and research into aquaculture and how that industry has moved to revitalize the fishery in the Province and has become a vital component of the fishery. It is

not the entire future of it, but it is a very vast component of the fishery.

We also looked at Forestry and Agrifoods, Mr. Speaker. In that aspect, they look at the management and stewardship of our forestry and the management and development of agrifoods policies as we go through. Natural Resources, again, was one Estimates where when we met it would have required – I can remember three years ago in my actual first Estimates Committee I think I ever attended was in an evening and it took six-and-a-half hours to get through the Estimates in Natural Resources. It did not take us this long this year. Maybe the Chair was pretty efficient and got things through.

I would say that it is a very important part of what we look at as part of our character now. Mining and energy, the two aspects of our natural resources, other than the other natural resources that come in this category that already have their own portfolios, but around the Island from Baie Verte to Buchans, to the Burin Peninsula to the Northeast Central area, just shy of Gander where some mining activities are on the go, you have Lab West and Voisey's Bay and, as a result of that, getting into our secondary processing we have Long Harbour, Come By Chance and areas like that, that really take up a fair amount of time from this.

Also, when we look at energy we look at the Bay d'Espoir development, we look at how Holyrood is continuing on as long as we need it, and what we have to put into that, as well as the Churchill River with the most recent development we are doing now in Muskrat Falls and what impact that is going to have for our future. You can see that this can be a very, very debatable topic as it gets in Estimates. It is something that you could have some lively questions on. It can be an easy move away from the budgetary items as it goes through, Mr. Speaker.

I think, just to outline for our viewers or citizens, we recognize now that this is how this Committee worked and what was there. In a few moments you are going to hear from some of the members of the Committee or people in the critic areas for these.

The list of people who sat on this Committee were: the Member for Grand Falls – Windsor-Green Bay South, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, the Member for Labrador West, and the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace. This was the group of people who made up that Committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: In the next two to three hours as we debate the Estimates Committee, or to the Concurrence – so actually we are bringing in the findings of the Estimates Committee which voted to accept without amendment, now we are bringing in and concurring that with the budgetary debate and bringing that forward so it all fits into the big picture. These people will probably be some of the people that you will see on your screen, I say to the people at home, in the next two to three hours. They will be offering their comments on what happened in these meetings and how it fits.

What I want to probably expound on in the three or four minutes I have left is I would really like to look at a follow-up from things I started in my last address a few days ago about the Budget where I talked about some of the targets and some of the needs of where we are, so it is in the plan for the next four or five years, Mr. Speaker. Through the Estimates Committees, many of the questions came in and said well, here is where we are looking at attrition, or here is where we are looking at some of the other things, and how it impacts on our budgetary numbers starting in this current year.

Some of the things I was talking about the other day and started to talk about in targets I sort of rushed through a little bit because it was pretty near the end of my talk on the main Budget motion, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to allude back a little to it today. I just want to follow. The lead-up and the lead-in to this is the fact that obviously it is no secret that we have suffered a couple of years of really, really tough economic times. The biggest cause for this, even though it is probably not the sole cause, is the lower resources that we are getting, the lower income

that we are getting through the world prices of either oil or the resources – the ore that we are selling and how that impacts and enters into our budgetary picture.

Mr. Speaker, the plan forward over the next five years – there are many references through all of the Estimates Committees for all this. It looked at the fiscal performance targets that we needed to look at. There are five points that the Minister of Finance outlined when he delivered the Budget. I want to repeat them today because they have very much a strong impact on where we look, where we look to carve, and where we look to increase expenditure in – because in this current Budget we did not just say okay, we are not going to spend any money, because that would really, really, really stop our economy, Mr. Speaker. We had to balance the choice that we made through whatever we need to do in how we can garnish income, but how do we expend, or how do we borrow.

So the five targets, Mr. Speaker, as listed by the minister in his Budget Speech said debt expenses as a percentage of gross revenue will not exceed 13 per cent. So if I start to look at this – then if we look at the last twenty-five years. If we go back to 1991 and we look at fiscal performance indicators of whatever, then 13 per cent – it was not until 2008, Mr. Speaker, that we actually brought our debt expenses, the percentage of gross revenue below the 13 per cent threshold.

It is like in a graph, as any line graph goes, it waves up and down and up and down, but it has been hovering near 13 percent and whatever. So over the next five years, we made a commitment we are not going to cross that barrier of 13 per cent. As the projected outlook goes and all these documents, all the members on both sides of the House have these, then that is showing how the plan is for the next five years, that line will not exceed the 13 per cent threshold.

The net debt, as a percentage of nominal GDP, will not exceed 40 per cent. Mr. Speaker, there is another graph in here that shows – it is the same thing. If we go right back to 1991, and I would say it stops at 1991, but it did not say it went up over the 40 per cent mark in 1991. I would say that mark was way back in the waves like the mountains as you come along. We are

well up there, Mr. Speaker, above the 40 per cent.

Again, in 2007-2008 we came down below the 40 per cent mark, net debt as a percentage of our nominal GDP, and we have stayed down there. The projection is to continue through the duration of the plan that the minister outlined for this part of the Budget.

Now, if we look ahead—we can only look ten seconds as far as my comments are because my time is up, but I would like to expound on that. Maybe I will get a further chance.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for listening to me today. I thank you for the people of Bonavista North for listening to me, and everyone else have a good day and finish the debate.

Thank you, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is always a pleasure to follow the member. He is a very hon. member, Mr. Speaker, and it is always nice to hear what he has to say.

I am going to go on the Estimates and some of the things I heard today about the departments. I have been in this House a long while, Mr. Speaker, and I heard some things today that just flabbergasted me. I know the Member for Humber East brought up today, questions to the Premier. The Premier stood up today, he wanted to be the big guy. He wanted to be out front, I am going to handle everything. He brought it out about licensing units, facilities in the Province for tourism that have not been licensed, and on a fire and safety emergency.

What did the Premier of the Province tell the Member for Humber East? If you know any of them, call us. I was flabbergasted. Mr. Speaker, I was flabbergasted. Here we have Service NL that is supposed to enforce these regulations; here we have the Department of Tourism that is

supposed to certify these locations. We are talking about people. The Member for Humber East gave an example of three people in an unlicensed establishment that just barely made it out. What did the Premier, the Leader of this Province say: If you know any, call us and let us know.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House a long while and I know there is a lot of bantering going back and forth, but when you get the Premier of the Province to stand in this Legislature, and everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador can hear it, can see it, can look at the replay and see it, and not look at his minister and say: Minister, let's put a stop to this. Let's go search these out. Let's find these out. He says to the Opposition: Let us know.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue. Here we are under Tourism standing up and promoting: oh, yes, we are so proud to talk about how much tourism has increased. We have an increase of people coming into the Province. Here we are talking about a fire and emergency safety issue, and the Premier brushed it off as not a big deal.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say, there are times when the Premier wants to stand up and be the front guy. I guess people are telling him you have to be more out front, but if he is going to be out front he has to know what he is talking about. He has to take these issues seriously, because these are life and safety issues.

So I say to the Premier of the Province, if you do not have confidence in your ministers to go and find out where these establishments are, if you do not have regulators to go out and say: okay, if you do not follow these life and safety measures, we are closing your building down. He should not be standing on his feet. That is just one part.

I know the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Rural Development today was also Minister of EMS. He made a statement today from a question from the Third Parry. The minister stood up here today and made a statement saying that every day members opposite stand up and ask things about the Budget, when we asked about the 911 dispatch. The minister stood up and said every day you are asking us to spend more, spend more, spend more.

Mr. Minister, the 911 is self-sufficient by the seventy-five cents of the people of the Province. We are not asking you to spend any more. We are asking you to spend the money that the people in this Province are paying for. That is what we are asking for. We are not going out and saying spend another million dollars. The people of the Province are already paying for this.

I am not sure if the minister is aware of this, but I can show him. Not only in the Budget that they presented – the former Minister Judy Manning presented to me – not only are they paying for their services, but the \$400,000 a year – \$454,000, I think is the exact number – that the government put in to start 911 is being repaid to government. It is being repaid. It is actually being paid back to government.

Mr. Speaker, just for the minister's benefit, and just for the government opposite, because obviously they have not read it, they have not seen it, or they do not understand it – they can pick which one. Even with 911 being paid for by the seventy-five cents, even with the \$454,000 a year – I think it is for four or five years – being paid back to government, even with the money being taken out for the Next Generation, there is still \$189,000 surplus in the 911 fund, a surplus. We have the minister standing up and saying we are asked to spend more money because the people want a dispatch system.

Mr. Speaker, I am just in shock by what I heard here today. I am just absolutely shocked. I am only on one department yet, I am only on one department. You wonder why people of this Province think this government has to go, the way they treat people. Just think about that.

Here are volunteer firefighters out there who want to go to every call they can take; 80 per cent, 90 per cent, sometimes even higher, are all medical. They want to get called. They want to be there to save their fellow residents. They want to be the first responders, yet we will not do it because the minister: oh, you are asking us to spend money. We are not. We are asking you to spend the money of the seventy-five cents that the people are already paying for.

I also heard the minister today, Mr. Speaker, saying we have it like Nova Scotia, you have what you are paying for. Page 32 of the Pomax report clearly states that when this 911 was being developed back in 2012 – the Member for Gander was the minister, and I supported him at the time for bringing it in because it was a great concept. Page 32 of the report evaluates that it is a 911 dispatch system. They use the RNC in Corner Brook, Lab West, the RNC up in Labrador, and the St. John's Regional Fire Department. That is what it was based on – page 32.

I also know it was brought up here today, like Nova Scotia. Page 9 of the report, Nova Scotia has a dispatch system. It has a dispatch system. So when I hear statements put across the House just because people, oh, we are going to say it because it is true. I have to stand and correct them, because this is an issue for all the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is not a Liberal, this is not a PC issue, and this is not an NDP issue. This is a life and safety issue. This is something I have been advocating.

Mr. Speaker, I have to give the minister – the minister agreed to sit down with me and go through it. I thank the minister for that. I am hoping that when we are all finished, we can come to a conclusion and put the dispatch system in that was originally put forward by the Member for Gander. I know it took him two or three years to develop that when he was the minister. That is what we should have in the Province.

If there is a good reason why we cannot, let's sit down so someone can explain it to me and someone can explain it to the volunteer firefighters who I know. One of them, Mr. Speaker – and I do not mind using his name – is Colin Tucker. He is one, Colin Tucker. He is the fire chief in Meadows. Colin Tucker is a man who not only is the fire chief; he is trained to the point where he does work for EMS. He goes out and trains other volunteer firefighters in Western Newfoundland. You tell me he is wrong about the dispatch system?

Colin Tucker took it upon himself – and the minister can call him, I can give him his number. He called Nova Scotia and said we are getting

conflicting views, are you dispatch? They said yes, we are dispatch. Yet we had the former minister and now we have the government saying we cannot have dispatch.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go on to the next part of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. I ask what rural development? How much rural development do we see in rural Newfoundland and Labrador these days? How much? We have seen one down in Roddickton that the government tried back in 2008 and 2009. The problem with it is that they relied on gas and oil so much the rural development just took a sidestep to it because they were flush in cash.

Mr. Speaker, do you know the most damning thing that I find about all this? Tom Marshall, when he was out in Corner Brook when he talked about the hospital – two short years ago. I remember his statement. I was bringing up about the hospital. Two short years ago Tom Marshall being flippant, out there trying to belittle people like me who are talking about the Corner Brook. What did Tom Marshall say in Corner Brook? Money is not the problem. We have \$2 billion in cash. It was two short years ago.

Where did it all go? If you see the speeches that he gave as Minister of Finance, he said the oil cannot last; the prices will not keep up. So when I hear the members opposite stand up here on their feet and say no one predicted it, well I can tell you that you are wrong. Your former Premier and your former Finance Minister predicted it. Mr. Speaker, he predicted it. He said this was going to happen.

Instead of diversifying the economy, Mr. Speaker, they lived on oil and they spent. They always ask: What would you do different? I gave a speech here two weeks ago. I was up to \$380 million of wasted money and I can keep going. That is not even counting Nalcor. That is not counting Muskrat Falls and how much money has gone in there. That is not even counting that – absolutely not even. That is excluded from that.

What we have to do, Mr. Speaker, as a Province is we have to get back to diversifying the economy. We have to get back to rural

Newfoundland. We have to start industry, but we have to do it in a planned and sustainable way. I am going to talk about Holson Forest Products up in Roddickton in a little while, and talk about how not to do a project with government funds.

I just want to bring those few points up that were just brought up in Question Period today. I say to the Premier of the Province – he always brags that he was an RNC officer, Mr. Speaker. I give him credit, he served the public. How many times did I hear him say people should not make their own arrest, they should call the RNC. Here he is telling people now if you know of someone who is out there with a fire and safety issue, call us.

What do you have the ministers for? Why do you have regulations? Why do you have inspectors? Why do you have them? If the Premier cannot stand up and say to the ministers we have to put a stop to this because of fire and safety, there is something wrong. There is absolutely something wrong when the Premier has to stand up and say call us if you know there is an issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak about the Holson Forest Products down in – and I heard some comments made on this recently from the government. I was on Public Accounts and I went through the whole business plan of this. I just wanted to let the general public know this is nothing about the owner. I said it in Public Accounts and I will say it here now, the owners of Holson Forest Products were set up to fail. They could not succeed the way that government put it in place. They could not do it and I will tell you why.

If you have a product, first of all, you have to make sure you have a market. They never had a market. I just want to let the people of the Province know before government approved – and we were told it was by Executive Council. They had to bring it up. They bypassed everything and brought it up to Executive Council. Before the application was approved, before they got the stamp, there was \$8 million spent. They allowed them to spend \$8 million.

That is on the public record. I ask the government and I ask anybody who wants to

stand up, how can you go to people in Roddickton, Holson Forest Products, how can you go up and say we are going to put this amount of money in your plant? We want you to diversify up here on the Northern Peninsula without having a marketing plan. If they did have a marketing plan – we are talking about poor planning.

Just say you had a marketing plan. The second thing that was never, ever pushed in there: How are you going to get your product to market? How are you going to do it? The federal government wharf that was there was torn down. They had no way of shipping it; absolutely, no way. When they were trying to go to St. Anthony, they never even had the storage facility to put the products in.

To the people of Holson Forest Products, you were doomed to fail because there was no proper planning. The bigger thing about this – and I have it here – is the recycled power plant. You want to talk about due diligence, Mr. Speaker. I know the minister here stood up and said it was the Liberal government, which is absolutely false and he was man enough to stand up and correct that. I give him credit.

The amount was undisclosed of what was paid for it. There is talk, but the government will not release that either. It was sold to a company in Quebec. Here is what the company in Quebec – a Nalcor asset that they had – here is what the company said: They did not say how much it paid for the equipment it is buying from the company, but did note in a release it is making an important savings of \$7 million on the estimated cost of \$17 million. So what they are saying is the estimated cost, Mr. Speaker, and that was an asset of Nalcor. That was an asset up on the Northern Peninsula that was sold to Quebec, the people's asset, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, here is the other part of all of this. The land that it was on, there is still supposed to be an evaluation done on the environmental liabilities of it. It is still not done. We stood in this House and asked the Minister of Environment to give us the inventory of contaminated sites in the Province. Can you imagine? This government stands up and talks about the environment and they cannot stand in

this House of Assembly – and the minister kept on saying – the Member for St. John's West stood up there on a regular basis – it is coming, it is coming. They cannot give you an inventory of what contaminated sites there are in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Now, that is the minister. I can see why the Premier will not ask the Minister of Service NL, Mr. Speaker, to go out and do an assessment. He cannot even get the contaminated sites, which are all there. So all they have to do is send officials out, get it done.

We have been waiting now for years for an inventory. We still cannot get it done, Mr. Speaker. Here is another site that the money – whatever it was we still do not know, sold to Quebec, a contaminated site, and we are asking who is paying for that site? It is supposed to be taken out of the funds – from my understanding, taken out of the sales. We still do not even know what the cost of that contaminated site is. You are wondering why people feel that this government is not living up to their responsibilities. That is just two departments. In this here there are many other departments.

Mr. Speaker, how can the people of the Province have confidence in the government? Look at the Abitibi site. It is just amazing what is happening in this Province. This government is being so secretive or incompetent, I am not sure which. When a minister of this Crown, who represents all the people of this Province, stands up and is going on – it is coming soon, it is coming soon. You will have it in days, you will have it in a week, and you still do not have it for the people of the Province.

Even the Auditor General was asking for it. The Member for St. John's West is supposed to stand up here and say, yes, it is coming soon. We are still waiting for it, Mr. Speaker. That is the kind of importance that this government puts on the environment. That is the kind of importance they put on the liabilities of this Province.

We can go through each one of these departments one at a time. I will use Natural Resources as a prime example. I just heard the member say that oil prices – Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt we do well with oil. The question is when you do well, what are you going to do with it?

I will tell you the funniest one that I heard, Mr. Speaker. We were talking about the large amount of money coming in from oil, \$25 billion they spent. All of a sudden we heard the Premier; in 2021 now we are going to set up a fund. We are going to have a little rainy-day fund we are going to tuck away. For the first ten years, twelve years, no talk about that, no need, let's spend, spend, and spend. Let's throw it all into Muskrat Falls. Let's just spend it all. Let's go with the \$30 million that we spent up in Parson's Pond to drill the hole and see if you can find some oil, but now, all of a sudden in 2021 we are going to put away a rainy-day fund. The sad part, he expects the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to actually believe that, to actually believe that statement that we are going to put it away.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is getting near. There are a lot of other departments here that hopefully I will have time to speak about later. If not, I just want to let the people of Newfoundland and Labrador look at the comments that were made here today, look at the comments that were made in this House today. Get the facts, Mr. Speaker, because when you get the facts you will know that this government is on autopilot and they are not doing the best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a privilege and an honour for me to rise in the House of Assembly today and speak to the Concurrence debate. I am very pleased to be a Committee member of the Resource sector Estimates. I usually find the Estimates to be a very interesting exercise and very informative. As our Chair who spoke a little while ago, during the Estimates he said he found them even more interesting than usual in his role as Chair. He certainly did a great job, so I commend him for that.

I guess I wanted to explain a little bit first of all to the people who are watching at home a little bit about what this Budget process is and what Concurrence is. Every year, it is a standard process here in the House of Assembly. Once the Budget is brought down, it is read into Hansard by the Minister of Finance. Following that, the Finance critic of the Opposition gets two times the amount of time that the Finance speaker used in his speaking, or a minimum of three hours, whichever is greater. That is the standard process.

Usually – not usually, what always happens in that standard process is the Opposition critic then lays down a motion called a non-confidence motion. Then following that, another member of the party in Opposition lays down what is called a sub-amendment. Through that process each and every person in the House of Assembly, if they so desire, gets twenty minutes to speak to the Budget.

We would then speak first to the sub-amendment, we vote on the sub-amendment, you move into the non-confidence motion, and then from there you go back to the main Budget, Mr. Speaker. It equates to a lot of time and a lot of speaking in the House of Assembly.

I, for one, by far prefer when that speaking is about fact and about policy. Unfortunately, that is not always the case and it can be a bit challenging to sit in your seat sometimes and listen to some of the rhetoric that comes through the Budget process, but most of it is indeed very educational and very enlightening. I would like to think that the people who watch this in their homes actually do learn a bit more about what is in the Budget and what the government of the day is proposing to do, and any issues that members opposite may bring attention to. It is important for everybody to see all aspects of that, Mr. Speaker.

The reason why I particularly like the resource sector is because that is the category where I see the majority of job creation actually taking place in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is the hands-on side of things, it is where you see the diversity in our economy, and it is where you see some great things happen in terms of innovative developments, ongoing interests in things like fishery and aquaculture, forestry and

mining. Some they are absolutely exciting sectors to be looking at, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things I wanted to speak to in all of that is how – I have heard it several times in this House of Assembly when the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde got up today to speak to his petition, and as well the Member for Virginia Waters has stood in this House from time to time and said that Newfoundland, for the last eighteen months, has had job losses. That baffles me, Mr. Speaker. I do not know where their research is being done, but I have right here the facts and I am more than happy to table it in the House of Assembly. It is from a credible, reliable source, *The Canadian Press*, posted on May 18, 2015.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? In Newfoundland and Labrador we were the only province to post a gain in jobs, 2,200 new jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador during the months of March.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Can you believe it? March, that was just two months ago, not eighteen months ago. Statistics Canada said 2,200 jobs were created in Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters, on a point of order.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I correct the member opposite. What we are talking about is 18,000 job losses year over year, month over month, same comparison. I would ask her listen more in debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

MS PERRY: (Inaudible) we would love to see them. As I said, I would love to see you table the information. I do not know where you are getting your facts. You just clarified how you are putting some spin on it, but here are the real facts: 2,200 jobs created in Newfoundland as its unemployment rate declined to 12.6 per cent, down sharply from 13.3 per cent in March.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Tabled for the House, Mr. Speaker, so they can be aware of the good things that are happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. One thing I am very proud to say, that we as a government have is confidence in the people of our Province. We have confidence in the entrepreneurs, we have confidence in their innovation, and we have confidence in their ability to diversify.

We all acknowledge, life is such that it is not always on a peak, and sales are not always going to be – and anyone who is in business knows this – at the top. There are highs and lows and there are peaks and valleys in running a business and in operating a government.

Our government has clearly stood the course during those valleys, and we maintained our confidence in the people during those valleys, Mr. Speaker. This Budget today clearly reflects how we are very confident – this Budget reflects our confidence and our ability to turn the corner once again in the very near future. We believe in the great prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So going back again to the Estimates committee – and I do believe some members have mentioned this already – the resource sector includes the Departments of Advanced Education and Skills; Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development; Environment and Conservation; Fisheries and Aquaculture; Forestry and Agrifoods; and Natural Resources. Now, Mr. Speaker, Natural Resources is the one I want to spend a little bit of time speaking to.

We just heard the Member for Bay of Islands when he got up to speak, talk about Muskrat Falls. I believe Hansard can correct me if I did not quite get it right. I believe he said it was a waste of money. One of the things that has bothered me immensely, that I still do not know the answer to, that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador still do not know the answer to, is: What is the Liberal position on Muskrat Falls? What is it? What is their plan?

Are they going to stop it? Are they going to shut it down? Because that is what they lead some people to believe, or would they stall it just to

make sure the costs balloon? Would something like that happen? I do not know, Mr. Speaker. I would not want to see something like that happen.

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

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

MR. JOYCE: I am not sure if – I will just give the member a chance to clarify. If she thinks the Opposition is going to slow down Muskrat Falls and make people of the Province suffer, it is sad day for you, Mr. Speaker, sad day –

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

MS PERRY: Mr. Speaker, we certainly look forward to hearing what the party's position is on it, because as I said, we do not know what the plan is.

The people who work on Muskrat Falls, you talk about megaprojects in the wind down phase now in Newfoundland and Labrador, Muskrat Falls is still a very major employer for us. What do you say to all the workers who are working on the project? What do you say to the future generations who are going to be able to avail of state-of-the-art hospitals, state-of-the-art schools, and state-of-the-art roads because of the profitability of a renewable resource like Muskrat Falls? It is an absolutely fabulous project.

To reinforce what I am saying, one needs to look no further than the district where I live, in Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. It is a beautiful district, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. Let's talk about the hydro generating facility that is in Bay d'Espoir. It was built during the 1960s, and I have had the opportunity to actually go back and read through some records of the debate at the time when Bay d'Espoir was under contemplation. There were many people strongly opposed to building that hydro facility in Bay d'Espoir, but I have to ask the question, where would we be as a Province without that power today?

Sixty per cent of the Island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador receives its power from Bay d'Espoir. If we had not built that facility we would have been in dire straits as a Province, I can certainly assure you. Unfortunately, in the wrongs that occurred during Lower Churchill, it was provinces like Ontario that developed, and Quebec, that reaped of all the benefits.

From Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador will receive the benefits from Muskrat Falls, and it will be Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who will reap the rewards for centuries to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: I am very, very proud of our venture there, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I was not planning to stand here and speak for a very long time today, because as I said, there is a lot of time dedicated to the Budget here in the House with the three different motions and twenty minutes each. The member who spoke just before I did asked a few questions that I feel like I have to respond to.

One of them was, how can people have confidence in this government? I would say, look at our record. Our track record for the last ten years is a fabulous track record in terms of results, Mr. Speaker. The research we have done in the fisheries, the innovative solutions we have brought forward in terms of health care, things like the diabetes pumps.

What would the Liberals cut? I have to come back to that question. What is their plan? They get up every day. They ask for money on this, more money on that, you need to do more here, more there, more, more, more. Where is all the money going to come from, Mr. Speaker? What do they plan to cut? Are they going to lay off the civil servants? Are they going to repeal the diabetic insulin pumps, which now are available and funded by government up to the age of twenty-five? Are they going to say, okay, now you are on your own?

Are they going to repeal the generic drug policy, Mr. Speaker, such that the policy will have to eliminate some of the medications we are now

able to cover for people? Are they going to drive up the cost of medications for the individual person so that the private sector business person makes the money and the person who cannot afford to buy the medications just cannot buy them anymore? We fixed that problem in large degree through the generic drug pricing policy. What is going to happen? What would happen to that?

Student loans reverting to the grant system, Mr. Speaker. When I stood in this House of Assembly to speak to the Budget last time, I spoke to how I could relate to that, even from a personal experience, the benefits of grants as opposed to student loans. Fabulous initiatives have happened by this government, and I have no doubt over the next five years we will continue in that regard.

Back to the question – because I seem to get excited with all the heckling that comes and veer off from where I was going. In asking the question, how can people have confidence in this government? How can they have confidence in a flip-flop, flip-flop strategy is how I would counter to that. How could they have confidence in a plan to plan to plan? No solid answers there, Mr. Speaker, a lot of rhetoric, but no solid answers.

I think the last speaker actually accused us again of being the government of secrecy. The government that is leading the way in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker, and probably North America through its new freedom of information act, better than anywhere else in the world, certainly in the country and in North America. So we are a government that has demonstrated –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) a million-dollar bill.

MS PERRY: Yes, okay, we might not have been perfect all the time. We are human, Mr. Speaker. Guess what? We recognize our mistakes, we correct our mistakes, and we listen first and foremost to the people of the Province. We do not do it with words; we do it with strong, clear, concise action. That is what we have clearly demonstrated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Again, I say secrecy, how can you say secrecy? Every single one of the candidates in our leadership race has disclosed their financial contributions, Mr. Speaker. We are still waiting for people who ran for the leadership of the Liberal Party to disclose their finances. It has not been disclosed by some of the members who ran in that leadership. Why not? The contributions to the \$25,000 dinner have not been disclosed. Why not?

Why do the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want to know this? Why is it important? Is it important because people need to know who the Liberal Party would be beholden to? They would need to know who the policies they are coming up with are catering to. It is important information. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador need to know, Mr. Speaker.

So how can you on the one hand condemn us for secrecy, and on the other hand be so secretive yourself? It makes no sense to me whatsoever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS PERRY: There is a word that is used to refer to it that I am not allowed to use in the House, so I will not, but it is not lost on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I am so proud of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and how far we have come as a voting population – I would like to think – since Premier Williams came into office in 2003. He saw the severe problems that were underway in government and he took measures, Mr. Speaker, to correct them. I look no further than the Green report.

I certainly hope, although I am not convinced, that all members of this hon. House have read the Green report because it really took some strong measures to rectify some serious problems that existed within the House of Assembly. We were the government that brought the Auditor General back into the House of Assembly, something I am so very proud of us for having done.

I did not mean to stand here and speak this long, but I did feel I had to counter some of the points

raised. Again, before I sit down I just want to say 2,200 new jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador during the month of March.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: What a Province. What a government. What a Premier. What a leader. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to being here to ensure that Newfoundland continues to grow. We believe we are the best party to do that in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was preparing earlier with some notes, but after that speech I have lots of notes for this afternoon and some for tonight. The member finishes her statement or her speech talking about March's job report. Well, if I ever seen cherry-picking, Mr. Speaker, that is cherry-picking: 18,000 year over year in this Province we have lost – 18,000. The member finds the month of March we added some jobs. Well, let's look at the big picture. Year over year this Province has lost 18,000 jobs.

Just today, Mr. Speaker, I asked some questions in Question Period and the Premier responded. I talked about the CFIB which is the voice of independent business in Canada and in Newfoundland and Labrador.

AN HON. MEMBER: What are they saying?

MR. CROCKER: I will tell you what they are saying; they are saying that business confidence in Newfoundland and Labrador has fallen. Since this Premier took over last September we were number one in the country and we had the best business confidence in the country. Do you know where we are today, six months later? We are number six. Well, we are tied for number seven; Quebec is point three below us. So, Mr. Speaker, with this government we will soon be there.

Only 13 per cent of businesses surveyed plan on hiring new people this busy season, the season where people get hired, this busy summer season, we have fish processing, we have fish harvesting, we have our vibrant tourism industry, but only 13 per cent of businesses surveyed are going to hire. That is job numbers. Let's see the job numbers on that.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to come back to some more issues with the Resource Committee and take an opportunity to go down through them and talk about my role as the critic for Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, as well as some of the departments and how they affect the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde. Mr. Speaker, as you stand here, it is always an honour to stand and represent the people of our district.

The first one, Mr. Speaker, I look at – and this is how they come out in the Committee – is Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. It is interesting – and I will go back again to the CFIB and talk about some of their recent reports because this is the voice of independent business in Canada, and as well in Newfoundland and Labrador. They look at the priorities of business in the Province.

The highest priority in the Province is workers' compensation. We are one of the few jurisdictions left in the country that does an estimated payroll when it comes to workers' compensation. We do not use actuals, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to payroll and this creates a burden on small businesses throughout the Province when it comes to their monthly dues to workers' compensation. If a business underestimates a year's payroll what happens the following year is they are penalized, so you have to estimate, so you have to guess.

You think if you are a paving contractor or a fish plant operator, you start out the season in January, February 28 your workers' compensation estimates have to be in for that year. That is a big, big question to ask somebody in a volatile industry.

What about the housing industry? We know the housing industry is slow. So if you are a contractor in housing, you have to estimate your payroll. If you estimate under your payroll

amount, you get a penalty. Come the following year, you get penalized. If you estimate over, you take your working capital and send it to workplace health and safety that then credit you the following year. It is a lose-lose for business. Our estimating system of workers' compensation is a lose-lose for business. You underestimate, you get a penalty. If you overestimate, workers' compensation gets your money until the following year, so it is a lose-lose.

Shortage of skilled labour is another area identified. I hear the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair speak about this daily in job reports and false numbers that the government throws out there. We have just seen 18,000 job losses, but business is saying that they cannot find people; the skilled labour is not there. Obviously we are not relating the training to the jobs, missing the boat again.

Government regulations and paper burden – as a former small-business owner, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you one of the biggest burdens on individuals in this Province when it comes to regulation is burden and a burden by government. Government committed back, I think, early in its mandate, twelve years ago – and they like to go back. They committed to red tape reduction.

We achieved some milestones in red tape reduction, I think, at one point. The government committed to reducing it and reducing it and we did pretty good; we got our mark up. On our last CFIB report when it comes to red tape reduction, we had fallen to a C minus. So I think we were up to a B at one time, but we are slipping back. Our red tape burden is building again for small business.

Availability of funding – one thing that the CFIB points out is that even though the government has the Business Investment Corporation, this money is targeted to certain sectors, Mr. Speaker, and does not really fill all the needs of all the business sectors in our Province. When they asked their members would you support tax relief to all businesses regardless of sector – so it is tax relief, not sectors. This comes back to the landing as well, landing is sector wise.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party – and I get a kick out of this. They get up over there and talk about oh, you guys have not talked about policy or what you are going to do. Well, a couple of things in the business portfolio that our leader and our party said we are going to do, we are going to have a youth entrepreneur retention strategy. Let me tell you succession and succession planning in business in Newfoundland and Labrador is non-existent. Over 50 per cent of business owners in this Province have no succession planning. They do not know where their business is going.

Interestingly enough, the majority of businesses in this Province, and the majority of family businesses, the succession is not to a family member. So government has never fostered any strategy for the succession of business.

MR. HILLIER: Are they going to close?

MR. CROCKER: Unfortunately, that is what we are seeing.

The Member for CBS says, are these businesses just going to close? Well, unfortunately, in lots of parts of rural Newfoundland and Labrador that is what we are seeing. We are seeing business owners with successful businesses walking out, locking the door behind them. I see it every day. This is where our youth entrepreneur retention program would come in.

We have also said that if we are to form the next government, Mr. Speaker, business investment tax credits. These will be broad-based tax credits. These are tax credits that benefit every small business in the Province. That is some of the things our party, our leader is saying that we need to do to help build business in our Province.

It was interesting enough, the Member for Burgeo – La Poile – I am sorry, not Burgeo – La Poile. I apologize to my friend from Burgeo – La Poile. Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, geography got me for a second. It was interesting, she brought up in her statement about campaign fundraising and dinners, and this and that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, twelve years ago – the clock is ticking – the party opposite, the government

promised campaign reform, and election reform. They were going to tighten up. They were going to bring in some modern rules. Guess what? Twelve years later, no rules. Guess what? Our leader, our party, has committed to campaign financing reform.

MR. S. COLLINS: (Inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: Bring it in. I say to the member, you have had twelve years to bring in campaign reform.

MR. S. COLLINS: (Inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I say to the Member for Terra Nova –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I say to the Member for Terra Nova –

MR. S. COLLINS: Your friend.

MR. CROCKER: I say to my friend from Terra Nova – if he wants me to call him his friend, I will be his friend, but I say to the member, your party had twelve years to bring in campaign reform and it was not done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: So you can get up all day long.

I will come back to the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune again, talking about we are the open government. That is practically hilarious. They have been the open government now for probably twenty-four hours. Twelve years, and now twenty-four hours later they are the most open government in Canada.

AN HON. MEMBER: Another Liberal policy.

MR. CROCKER: Another Liberal policy.

It was our leader, Mr. Speaker, who stood at a press conference moments after Bill 29 passed, moments after, and said the first act he would do as Premier of this Province is repeal Bill 29.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Well, we do not have to repeal anything. We do not have to repeal Bill 29 anymore, because finally, less than twenty-four hours ago, the government finally came to their senses and repealed Bill 29. Mr. Speaker, not until it cost the taxpayers of this Province over a million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, let's go back. They talk all the time about the financial contributions, and leadership contributions. Where are the leadership contributions of failed premier Frank Coleman? I have not seen any leadership contributions from Mr. Coleman. I have not seen any contributions.

Mr. Speaker, I am just going to turn off on tourism for a second and its implications on my district. Next year, in 2016, we are going to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the landing of the first transatlantic cable in Heart's Content. I call upon government to make sure this event receives the recognition and the necessary funding to make it a success. It was a very important milestone. It led to communications and where it is today, and ironically enough, Mr. Speaker, in Heart's Content today, cellphones do not work – the birthplace of communications in North America, and no cellphone coverage.

Mr. Speaker, I have entered a petition this afternoon from the residents of Northern Bay and surrounding area.

AN HON. MEMBER: Say that again.

MR. CROCKER: What is that? There is no cellphone coverage?

AN HON. MEMBER: Birthplace.

MR. CROCKER: The birthplace of communications in North America was Heart's Content, 150 years ago. Today, there is no cellphone coverage, Mr. Speaker. The thing with that, I would understand if government played a role – let's just go back to playing a role in it. We have seen that the government has not played a role.

In 2011, was the last time this government mentioned cellphone coverage, and I believe it is

seventeen words in the Blue Book. I think there are seventeen words in the 2011 Blue Book that reference cellphone coverage in Newfoundland and Labrador, and they have not spoken a word about it since. Well, actually, there was a word. The Member for Lake Melville got up last week and said we deserve cellphone coverage in urban areas, but why do we expect it in rural areas?

AN HON. MEMBER: He did not say that. I don't believe that.

MR. CROCKER: He did say it, I have Hansard.

Mr. Speaker, I assure you that the residents of Trinity – Bay de Verde, and the residents of a lot of rural parts of this Province deserve cellphone coverage, and it is time we get a strategy.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Member for Lake Melville, the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs?

MR. CROCKER: Yes, it is amazing.

Mr. Speaker, rural development, cellphone coverage, and the lack thereof, it is astonishing. The fact that in Northern Bay the people have had an eyesore for five years, a burned down building with no action of having it cleaned up. I asked the Minister of Environment to ensure that this cleanup is done sooner rather than later.

It has been four years, I think, since this building burned down. It is directly across the entrance of Northern Bay Sands where tens of thousands of people will visit this summer and there is this massive eyesore. Not only is it an eyesore, the remnants of the fire is still there right down to the metal. There has been nothing done whatsoever, not a thing.

MR. HILLIER: Alders will soon be over it now.

MR. CROCKER: Actually, I say to the Member for CBS, alders are growing there, and there has never been any action.

It is the government's responsibility to ensure a clean environment. We talk about our great tourism ads, and they are great. It is beautiful to see the bedspreads blowing in the wind. If you

drive Route 70 and you go through Northern Bay, it is not a bedspread you are going to see, you are going to see the remnants of a burned down building five years ago with no action taken.

Mr. Speaker, other issues, as I look down through the Resource Committee, and their effect on my district – obviously, one of the most important issues in my district is the most important industry, and that is the fishery. We look no further than Bay de Verde and Old Perlican with the shellfish processing and the millions and millions of pounds of shellfish that are landed there each year. Hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact throughout the Province, tens of millions of dollars of salaries paid in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde, and I would say, Mr. Speaker, the entire Bay de Verde Peninsula, along with many other parts of the Island.

Back last October, I was campaigning in Bay de Verde. My colleague from The Straits – White Bay North was with me. He ran into thirteen constituents who work in Old Perlican. There are people from Old Perlican and Bay de Verde – people from all over the Province, Mr. Speaker, working in Old Perlican and Bay de Verde.

Mr. Speaker, we look at aquaculture. I know the government has done some investment in aquaculture. I am not sure we are getting the jobs on the processing side. One thing about it, Green Seafoods in Winterton is processing mussels that are a part of the aquaculture industry. That helps the plant in Winterton provide longer employment as the season wears on. As they finish with their crab quotas, they turn in to do some mussels and help their employees get some extra time in the plant.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned a while ago about government's lack of communications with their cousins in Ottawa when it comes to cellphone coverage. There is another issue that always comes up on the doorsteps in Trinity – Bay de Verde. It is the food fishery and the lack of respect that we are shown from the federal government when it comes to the food fishery. I do not know if the Minister of Fisheries has had communications, or has communications –

AN HON. MEMBER: Do they talk to Ottawa?

MR. CROCKER: If you are not talking to Ottawa, how are the viewpoints of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians getting there to say we are being robbed in our food fishery, to say the least? We are not being treated fairly. Again, we are given a little three-week period to go out and catch our five fish a day and our neighbours in Nova Scotia are given a free-for-all, practically, but I never hear the government – I have not seen any letters from the Minister of Fisheries in my recent memory where he has asked the federal minister, Gail Shea, to intervene here and really take a close look at that.

The cod stock is rebounding and, at the end of the day, we are going to have to be prepared for processing. The Third Party has a private member's motion tomorrow ensuring that we get the proper respect, or the respect that we are due when it comes to the recovery of the cod fishery, so that the inshore fishers in the Province are first in this and we do not find ourselves in a situation we find ourselves with LIFO where we see people offshore in offshore companies being the primary beneficiary of the resource that is adjacent to us.

Mr. Speaker, we look at Advanced Education and Skills – and the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair asked questions of the minister yesterday about the idea of inclusion of people with disabilities. I actually have a number of people in my district who have brought this to my attention. They are parents of children – a lot of them about the same age as my son, my oldest son who is sixteen. These parent truly are concerned that when their sons and daughters are finished high school at age twenty-one – because the provision, I think, is that these children can stay in high school until they are twenty-one; there is nothing after.

The supportive employment programs are not connecting these people with the jobs or with the skills they need. I know, again, we as a party have been looking long and hard at this because it really affects a lot of people, and it really hits home when you realize parents have to struggle with these choices day in and day out and their children are not being included in a lot of different ways.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity this afternoon. I am going to take my place and I guess some other hon. member can have their time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I guess all the members on this side, usually when they are going to speak on the Budget, are right ready to speak until they start cherry-picking on the other side, because it seems like they like to cherry-pick.

Now, I will say to the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde he was not around in the 1990s. It is a good thing because the people who I know do not want to go back to the 1990s. We did not tear up contracts, Mr. Speaker. We did not lay off 2,000 people. We did not close schools and amalgamate schools. We did not do any of that. They were also the ones who took the money from the feds for the ferry settlement. What did they do with it? They certainly did not put it into any plan for replacement of ferries. Most of that was all done by this Administration. There have very short memories.

With regard to transparency, Mr. Speaker, they are talking about transparency. It is not that long ago, I think it was only Thursday or Friday – where did the money come from? Well, we really cannot tell you. How much was it? Well, we really cannot tell you. What was it from each bank? Well, we really cannot tell you.

Now, this is the leader coming out and saying we cannot say this and we cannot tell you this – transparency? One thing I will say, Mr. Speaker, about the Premier that we have today here in the government is that he is open and transparent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Some people said they were not born in the 1990s. Well, I will have them know I was certainly around in the 1990s and the

1980s as well. I have been around for some time. I have seen what the Opposition and the Liberals have done.

MR. WISEMAN: The 1960s and 1970s.

MR. FORSEY: The 1960s and 1970s, yes, I say to the minister. I even got the Minister of Finance awake there now. He is even responding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: I will also go back to when they were talking about municipal infrastructure and programs for municipalities. They are talking about the investment in municipalities – I am getting too excited, I am going to have to fix that speaker – because there was no such thing. I was on council for a couple of terms in my community and to get a cost-shared project was not easy. It was a 50-50, 60-40 if you were lucky. That was it.

Most communities, especially in rural Newfoundland, could not afford that. They just could not afford it. That is why everything fell down. It got neglected because they could not afford it. Then our government brought in the cost-shared ratio. Of course then we started seeing work being done because our government and our Administration was paying the 90 per cent, paying the 80 per cent, and paying the 70 per cent.

A small community with less than 3,000 people could get a 90-10 cost share, a 10 per cent cost to the community. Get a million-dollar project to upgrade your water systems and you would only have to pay \$100,000. Mr. Speaker, that was a good program and it still is a good program.

What did the mayors of some of the municipalities say this year about our fire and emergency services and our funding for that? It was great. It was unprecedented. They were so pleased with the investment in the fire and emergency service funding for the municipalities, Mr. Speaker, because they could afford to do it.

The Mayor of Bishop's Falls said it was a great plan. Do you know why it is a great plan?

Because the Town of Bishop's Falls right now, thanks to the cost-shared ratio, can put in a \$14 million sewage treatment plant, Mr. Speaker, which should, I may add, be commissioned around the middle of August of this year thanks to this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: If they want to talk on the other side of their face though, they can –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): Order, please!

MR. FORSEY: – but they better be prepared to talk about facts. Facts are what it is all about. If they want transparency, listen to our Premier. They will get transparency because that is what our Premier is all about, is transparency. Not so much – it is even, like I said, only three or four days ago when they talked to their leader and because of public pressure they came back with a different view, never got all the facts because they do not have them yet.

We do not have the money on their dinners yet. How much were those dinners? Mr. Speaker, \$25,000, but we will not even go there. I mean, that is not even worth talking about. We are talking about \$370,000 now that banks can write off for a party and they say well, it is none of your business.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. FORSEY: Absolutely, none of your business. Isn't that amazing? That is the openness and transparency that their leader is offering. When you look at our leader you get what you see, openness and transparency, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Let's get back to the Committee. Mr. Speaker, I was very fortunate to be able to Chair the Government Services Committee, and today I had the opportunity to speak to some of the Estimates of the Resource Committee, Resource sector, which included – and I think the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune had already stated, and yourself as

Chair of the Committee, the Member for Bonavista North said as well that it takes in the Advanced Education and Skills; Fisheries and Aquaculture; Forestry and Agrifoods; Environment and Conservation; Office of Climate Change; Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to get to all of these departments today –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. FORSEY: – because if they want to know what business and rural development is doing and when they were investing in broadband, I could talk about that later, if I get a chance, or I could talk about our tourism industry and how much money it is bringing into the Province, but I may not get there. I am going to try, but I may not get there. I will say that the member who just spoke did speak about agriculture and what we are doing for agriculture, and we are doing some very good stuff.

We have worked hard at the industry as a government and as the industry themselves and the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker. I spent twenty-one years – and I will say it again – in the dairy industry and our people in that industry did work very hard. Apparently, the Member for CBS says that the people in the dairy industry do not work very hard, but I have news for them, that these people do work very hard.

I say, Mr. Speaker, if he has no respect for the people in the farming industry that get up 4:00 o'clock in the morning and work until 12:00 o'clock in the night, if that is their attitude with regard to the natural resources and the agriculture in this Province, they have some bad, bad issues if they do not respect this industry and that hard work that goes into it. I think they are certainly misinformed – well, they just do not care because if they cared, they would probably know some facts about it.

I know right across the Province, but in Central Newfoundland we have all kinds of initiatives out there in regard to root crops, in regard to the cranberries. The major one in the pork industry is in the District of Exploits, I would say,

Leamington Farms, doing a fantastic job. Right now, the culinary industry wants this product, right across the Province it is a big thing right now, and they are supplying it.

Mr. Speaker, we have farmers out there doing the root crops. Their product is in demand as well because it is local product. These people are doing a fantastic job, but also in doing that, we are also promoting food security and also promoting local products.

I am sure that I mentioned some of the programs that we have in agriculture, but I want to get into what the farmers, the association, and the department is doing in regard to teaching younger people in the Province about farming. I think it is a great thing, especially the initiative with Agriculture in the Classroom.

Some of the things that can help farmers get started, or even the ones who are in the industry – and even the bigger players, Mr. Speaker. In the dairy industry, we are 100 per cent self-sufficient. We are the same thing with chicken and eggs. We are doing very well in those areas and we are certainly, should I use the word, growing in other sectors as well.

Our Growing Forward 2 is \$6.2 million per year for the next five years, Mr. Speaker. It is a very good program. Our Agriculture and Agrifoods Development Fund is \$2.55 million per year. This fund was established to encourage the development, diversification, and expansion of large-scale agricultural products. Our Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program, \$2.25 million; our Cranberry Industry Development Program, \$7 million over five years. That is a cost share with ACOA, 75 per cent non-repayable.

Mr. Speaker, we have ten huge farms that started up in the cranberry industry. They all developed ten acres each which at the time was – well, we got 100 acres out of it. Now they are back into it again. They are developing more acreage. We want to get up to where we can have more production. I know that the Speaker understands it as well because he has some interest in his district.

The Land Consolidation Program is another great program that the farmers have said this has given them an opportunity to acquire more land

which is what they were looking for. Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of stuff that this government is doing and believe in. Agriculture and Agrifoods have 6,500 people employed in the industry and we are investing \$12 million this year.

I wanted to get into the Agriculture in the Classroom because I find now, anyone who has been listening, the farmers right from East to Central to West are heavily involved in this. Actually, the President of the Federation of Agriculture, provincially, is from Cormack, and then we have a farmer from Central Newfoundland, in Wooddale, that is on the board. We also have another farmer out here, and everybody is familiar with Lester's Farms, of course. They are heavily involved in the Agriculture in the Classroom.

Back in 2011, Mr. Speaker, the steering committee was comprised of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency, Agriculture and Agrifoods Canada, and the Department of Education. So that is how the committee was made up. There is some interesting stuff here – and I just want to touch on a couple of things, especially with the Little Green Thumbs, which is the Agriculture in the Classroom, it is a very good program. When it started in 2011, I think they started out with up to twenty-something schools. Well, this past year there were thirty-four schools, 1,800 students involved in the program, and there is a waiting list that has begun for September of this year. So that would just show you the interest.

To be fair to the schools that are already involved in it, I would just like to mention them because I think they deserve a lot of credit for what they are doing: Peacock Primary in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; Stephenville Primary; Elwood Elementary; Newtown Elementary; St. Matthew's; Cowan Heights Elementary; Immaculate Heart of Mary; Lakewood Academy; Smallwood Academy; Pasadena Elementary; Beachy Cove Elementary; Rennie's River Elementary; Templeton Academy, Eric G. Lambert School in Labrador; Newtown Elementary; E.A. Butler; J.R. Smallwood Middle School; and there are a few more – but these are the kind of schools and the places that

they are teaching the Agriculture in the Classroom, Mr. Speaker.

I was very fortunate the past couple of years to be able to participate with the Rooting for Health when actually the Kids Eat Smart program picked so many schools as projects for this Rooting for Health, and there were four or five schools across the Province. Last year I was able to attend St. John Bosco with the Minister of Transportation. This year, a school in my district, Helen Tulk Elementary, I was able to attend there because they were part of the program.

Mr. Speaker, last year, the program in 2014: St. John Bosco; Holy Family Elementary, Chapel Arm; Sprucewood Academy, Central; Pasadena Elementary, West; Queen of Peace Middle School, Labrador. That was the ones for last year.

This year it was: St. Matthew's Elementary; Anthony Paddon, Musgravetown; Elwood Elementary, Deer Lake; Helen Tulk, Bishop's Falls; and Peacock Primary, Labrador. They were the ones that participated this year. There were people there from the School Milk Foundation, people there from the breakfast program, people there from the farmers. That is what was really key, was the representation from the farmers.

I know a farmer from Wooddale, Chris Oram. He will not mind me mentioning his name, I am sure, because he has been promoting agriculture in the classroom, doing very well. I had the privilege that morning to sit in a classroom with Chris when he did some slideshows. He started teaching or showing the students what goes on in farming and what they have to go through. I must say, there were some very, very interesting questions that the kids did ask.

Agriculture is doing very well in the Province, Mr. Speaker, but not well enough. We need to do more. We need to do a lot more. We are encouraging new entrants, and we are getting new entrants, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased. It is only this year there were a couple of new young farmers out in my area who came into the industry, which is what we are looking for I would say, Mr. Speaker.

Just before I finish on the agriculture in the classroom, I just want to read this statement from one of the teachers. She said, "I believe every single student that has left grade 3 has developed an interest in and an appreciation for agriculture." – now that is amazing. "We had an opportunity to visit an agricultural fair. We had farmers in our classroom speaking to us about their lives and their profession. We had a cheese maker in for a cheese tasting session. We visited a farm. We ate fresh food all year long. We had an Agricultural Literacy Day in several grades. We were allowed to get dirty all the time! How could an interest in agriculture do anything but blossom!"

Now isn't that an amazing statement from one of the teachers in these classrooms?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Absolutely, absolutely!

Mr. Speaker, that is funded too, by the way, from the Growing Forward 2 program. I think it is around \$350,000 that goes into that program for the Agriculture in the Classroom and Little Green Thumbs.

I am about to clue up, but this is such a great project. I just wanted to explain what we are doing in agriculture and what we are doing to try to promote it and generate the interest. The programs we have available as a government, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important.

I will clue up with a couple of comments from the little students in the classroom. Students' comments, "I was shocked and one of our pepper plants was as tall as the Empire State Building. I felt like I was going to faint." – that is one of the kids. "The garden is growing good, I love it."

Another one, "Our garden is gigantic! I was so surprised when I walked in the classroom."

"I feel proud of how our garden is growing."

Then this one says, "I'm not very happy about what is happening at the top of our pole beans. It looks like they're dead! But the bottom is doing fine." That is the kind of interest that was

generated in agriculture in the classroom with the Grade 3s, Mr. Speaker.

With that, it is always a pleasure to represent the District of Exploits and the people of Exploits in this House of Assembly, and it is certainly always great to be able to talk about the good things that are going on in the Province and being optimistic, because do you know what? We are in a good position, and we are going to be okay.

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 am very pleased, as usual, to stand in this House and speak to the issues that concern the people of the Province, and to once again speak to the Budget.

Today, of course, we are speaking in what is called the Concurrence debate. We have met with all of the departments – not totally, we have some that we have to do here in the House, the Executive Council, but in terms of the departments of government, we have met with all of them in what is called Estimates meetings. Now we are here today to sort of do a roundup, as it were, with regard to the Estimates discussions that were held under the Committee called the Resource Sector.

It is a vast area, as are all of the committees really, and it is going to be hard to touch on everything that one would like to touch on, but I am certainly going to hit some key things. I did not intend starting with what I am going to start with, but because my colleague, the MHA for Exploits, ended on the whole thing of food security and since I was going to talk about it, I think that is where I am going to start.

Before doing that, basing my comments on a broader plane as it were, and that is the whole plane of, how do we use the resources in our Province to help the people of the Province? How do we use the resources in our Province to

meet the needs of people in our Province? When I say the resources, I mean resources in the broadest context. I mean resources in terms of our natural resources, the resources of our land, and the resources of our water. I mean resources in terms of our human resources, and resources in terms of money. Resources can have many, many meanings.

How do we use all of our resources to meet the needs of people? Especially, how does the natural resource in our Province connect with our human resource? That becomes the important question and the thing we want to talk about.

As a Province we are quite blessed, because we have, first of all, things that are similar to lots of other places. We have forests. So we have industry around forestry. We have land, therefore we have agriculture and we have development around our land. That is not new. We also have lots of water because of being an island. So we have the resources of the fishery, both an on-land fishery, as well as a fishery from our ocean. We have, of course, oil and gas in the offshore.

We have a tremendous resource build and resource rich mass of land. When you include all of the Island, as well as the land of Labrador, it is immense. Of course, I have to mention the power. The resource we have also, both in Labrador and on the Island with regard to water, the force of water; therefore, hydro energy. Of course, we have the mineral resources as well. So how do we make that work for people, Mr. Speaker? I think that is a major issue.

I am going to start, as I said, where the Member for Exploits left off, and start, first of all, with the whole issue of our land and our agriculture and what we do with our agriculture, and how do people benefit from our agriculture. When it comes to talking about food security, which I am going to talk about, we need that to tie in as well with the fishery because our fish, of course, is a major part of our natural resources, both in terms of the economic benefit to the Province as well as the thousands of people who are employed as harvesters and plant workers in the fishing industry.

Looking at food security, it is interesting, we have some startling figures with regard to food security; 90 per cent of our food is imported. In Ireland, I think, it is around 50 per cent, but here in Newfoundland and Labrador about 90 per cent of our food is imported. That means all of our food.

Yes, it is true that government does have a plan in place with regard to using land and accessing land in order to have that land farmed. That is really good, but in the discussion we had with the department during Estimates – I have so many papers here now, I am going to get lost. I hope not.

When we talked about the land that government is trying to get its hands on for the sake of producing food, we learned that right now the footprint that the agricultural sector occupies in the Province is about 25,000 acres. However, we are told by the Department of Agrifoods that we need to get to about 100,000 acres to include sufficient land base, to grow what is needed and required for self-sufficiency. That would be including self-sufficiency around livestock as well as self-sufficiency around vegetables and fruit.

We are one-quarter of the way towards the goal. We were told in Estimates – unfortunately, I do not have the figure in front of me – the number of acres per year that government is being able to access and then release to farmers. It is a fairly small amount, to the point that I made the comment in Estimates: Well, at this rate we will have food security in our Province about the same time women will have equality on the planet. That is saying something because we say that all the time in the feminist movement. At the rate we are going, it is going to be about 100 years before we reach our goal and it looks like food security here is about the same.

The Member for Exploits did make a valid point and that is there are good things going on in the community, some of them are efforts that government supports, some of them are efforts that government supports morally, but there are some good things going on but they are so tiny. They are going to be important for changing mentality and changing culture, I agree, but we need much more than those efforts. I applaud those efforts and they have to be happening.

Things like Farm to School – and we know for example a school here in the city, actually in my district, a private school, St. Bon's has started that in their cafeteria. So the stuff that is being used in their cafeteria, the food that is in their cafeteria, it is all locally produced food that is sold in their cafeteria. Then you have community gardens which are growing, and they are growing not just here on the Island but in Labrador as well. I think it helps get away from the notion – and there seems to be this notion that we cannot grow things here in Newfoundland and Labrador; we do not have good land. Well, it is not true, you know. We have all kinds of good land and we have land that can be made better. The community gardens are starting to get people to realize we can grow.

While I was not around in the early 1900s and even later than that when I was around, people were farming all over the place. Growing up in St. John's, for example, we were surrounded by farms here in St. John's, around St. John's itself and then all the way up the shore and out Conception Bay, people were farming everywhere.

Certainly, when I was a child here in St. John's, our produce was all locally produced. The meat that we ate, for example, was locally produced. We ate a lot of lamb and we bought that locally, up the shore. We had our own eggs. My grandfather had a place out in Manuels and he produced eggs. We ate locally much more when I grew up than we do now. Of course, that is a sign of the growth of agribusiness on this planet unfortunately, and agribusiness has taken over.

I think government is doing small steps around this but it is incumbent to not only make land available to farmers, but to find other ways in which also. Marketing is extremely important and when we look at something like the fishery which is so important to us on many levels, increasing marketing around fish and trying to really get our fishery not just being export-oriented, but also making our fish available here in the Province in a much broader way is also extremely important as a part of our food security.

We all know how healthy fish is. Our fish here, because it comes from colder waters, not only is

our fish healthy, but it is delicious. For example, if you eat lobster in Southern climates it does not compare at all in taste to lobster up here. Groundfish in Southern climates does not compare with ours. It is because of the colder water our fish is even better. It is not only healthy, but delicious. We are in danger of that resource becoming less sustainable if we do not work closely with a federal government that is willing to understand the need for that sustainable resource to not just be an export resource, but a resource that is important inside of our Province as well.

We see government trying to work – and we are all involved in this because of the All-Party Committee, we are all becoming more involved with it – with a federal government that just does not seem to understand why that resource has to be shared and the importance of that resource here in this Province. What happened with the Northern shrimp and access to Northern shrimp and the sharing of quotas, what has just happened with the quota with regard to halibut – which is absolutely disgraceful to have decisions made by a federal government based on a political basis to further their own cause to try to get re-elected. To have decisions made around that wonderful resource based on that as a goal is absolutely unbelievable.

So we have a lot that we have to face, but it is important that we do it. It is important that we do it both for the workers in the fishery. We have 9,465 harvesters in our fishery and 7,880 processors. These are good numbers, but they are down. The numbers are moving down, so we need an aggressive plan by government with regard to marketing, with regard to making sure that the fish that is taken out of our waters is processed here in our Province. We have to get away from a mentality that gives benefits to corporations and forgets the need of those working in the industry, the kind of thing that is happening with OCI. This government seems to have a favourite eye on OCI, giving exemptions to OCI that are not benefiting the workers in our Province. It is all tied in together, the food security, the desire to keep that industry not only alive, but to keep that industry growing for the sake, one, of the economy of people and, two, because that resource would be so healthy for our Province.

Something that the government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Something that this government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I apologize to the member for interfering, but I would like the co-operation of the members of the House, please.

I recognize the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

The point I want to make next is really an important one, so I am glad to have the order called, and that is we have to change the thinking that has been happening in this Province. I have seen with this government across the way, in spite of so many of them representing rural Newfoundland and Labrador, an attitude that does not seem to understand that the economy of rural Newfoundland and Labrador is the backbone of our provincial economy. It always was and it still is. So we have to look at how do we work with rural Newfoundland and Labrador to maintain that backbone so that our economy continues to grow?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Without a strong fishery, without strong, community-based and rural community-based economic development the economy of this Province goes down the drain.

It has been that circle on our coast that has held us up for generations. So we have to look at what does that circle need in order to keep holding us up, not how do we help communities die out, not how do we help people resettle.

There may be some of that that has to happen, but it does not have to happen for the majority. How do we strengthen that circle that surrounds us physically and that keeps us going economically? That is what we have to start thinking; that is how we have to start thinking. We cannot allow communities to die not just because of the people living in them, but because that circle of our rural communities is what keeps us going.

It is how we got started in the format that we are as a land that had Europeans come over to it, and it is how we have to view it. The realization that we would not have the urban cities that we have, we would not have the urban realities, without being held up by that circle of rural communities which are based in fishing, which are based in forestry, which are based in the mining industry. How do we make the natural resources work for us?

When we look at forestry and we see how little the government is doing around forestry – years after nationalizing the forest resources that belonged to Abitibi Bowater, government has yet to find any industry willing to use the resource. Other than paying insurance on a mothball pellet plant on the Northern Peninsula and engaging in endless negotiations with companies about the potential use of our pulpwood resource, government has done nothing. All they have done is talk, and they have absolutely no plan in place for keeping our forestry industry going – none whatsoever.

I need to talk because it is a critic area of mine and it is not under resources, but it is, and that is a major concern under our educational system, Mr. Speaker. There are many things I could talk about with regard to that. I am pleased that finally we are going to have all-day kindergarten beginning in 2016, obviously. I am pleased that early childhood education is now part of our educational Department of Education, but that is going to mean we have more of a challenge with regard to making sure that we develop a full, publicly, accessible and affordable child care program.

The piece that is sort of falling between the cracks, I think, because it involves a minority, has to be addressed by this government. That is what is happening with regard to what is so-

called inclusion in our school system. Because if inclusion means you just have all of the children in the classroom without the resources that they need, then we have a major problem.

I do not know if the members of the government heard – I am sure the Official Opposition did and we certainly did – a story on CBC Radio this week about a family in Alberta, in Fort McMurray, who have a child who is autistic and who is getting one-on-one assistance and instruction as part of the educational system in school. They would love to come home to this Province, but they cannot because everything that they are now receiving as part of the educational system they would have to, first of all, try to find and, secondly, pay for it themselves back here in this Province.

This government came out with a wonderful notion of inclusion and then did not put resources in place for the children who are in those classrooms, and did not put resources in place that would assist the teachers as well. It is disgraceful what they have done, Mr. Speaker, absolutely disgraceful.

I have to make a point once again about what I have been grilling the Premier on over the last two weeks. That is this government's short-sighted answer to needs in our health care system, particularly around long-term care – privatize, bring in the profit sector to take care of social needs. That is not what we want in this Province. I am telling this government that is not what the people of this Province want either.

They do not want privatization of the social programs in this Province, but that is their vision, wonderful vision. Not a vision of social justice. Not a vision of how we, as a government, make things work for everybody so nobody falls between the cracks and nobody gets left behind, but a vision of let's turn it over to the for-profit sector. It is out of our hands. We will not have worry about it and to hell with what happens. Well, that is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. That is not acceptable at all.

Thank you very much for the time on the floor today.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, what is not acceptable – we can have a great debate in this House about what is not acceptable, but to hear the House Leader of Third Party stand today and talk about what is not acceptable. I do not know where to jump in on what she was saying. I am not overly critical by nature, Mr. Speaker, but there are a few comments that were made there and I think it is important to clarify that for the people watching. I am sure right now at 5:00 o'clock in the evening, or close to it, people are watching. To hear the House Leader of the Third Party condemn this government about rural Newfoundland and Labrador, it is unbelievable.

I sat in this House – I represent a fishing district. I have said it before I have thirty-six communities. They were born in the fishery and they will die in the fishery, Mr. Speaker. We are building tourism around that, no question, but to say that this government does not understand the backbone of the economy of rural Newfoundland is absolutely shameful. I do not know where she has been. Maybe tucked down over the hill here in St. John's, but I can tell you she has not been in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: I can go on. Mr. Speaker, we have had debates in this House about the fishery, all-party committees. The Liberal members have stood up. We have stood up. We fought for the fishery. We have argued with Ottawa. We have worked with the FFAW. We have worked with processors. We put money in the communities when they lose their plants. We help work through to make sure plants can survive. We have talked fish in this House. Many, many times we have talked fish. Mr. Speaker, I have sat in the House and for two years she could not say the word fish – she could not say the word fish.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: You can shake your head, and you know it. Mr. Speaker, she can shake her head, but I guess Earle McCurdy is writing her notes these days. We are going to hear a lot

more about the fish from the NDP, and that is all right, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I bring that up simply for the fact that she would stand here and condemn our government and our rural record; condemn our government about the fishery, condemn our government and our commitment as rural members, how we are supporting the economy in our rural areas. I will put it up against any government in our history.

Let's take a look at some of the areas. We can go down to the South Coast and look at aquaculture, Mr. Speaker. We could do that. We talk about it all the time.

I am going to talk about my own district and what is happening to the rural economy in The Isles of Notre Dame. Let's talk about The Isles of Notre Dame and the growth we have seen. We have a strong fishery with strong investments. Young fishermen are doing well. It is a high risk, big investments, lots of concerns about quotas, but I can tell you, we have a strong fleet of fishery in our district. We have plants that are employing workers, lots of them, so much so they cannot find enough workers. They keep talking about the concern there are no jobs – they cannot find enough workers.

Beyond that, the supply area, whether it is in – you can come into Twillingate or you can go into Fogo Island, Mr. Speaker. You can see all the boats there and all the spinoff into the communities and the support they get from not only businesses in the town but from the mayors of the communities and from councils and so on. Mr. Speaker, we value the fishery. It is the backbone of our economy. One thing she did say was right, it is feeding into the larger communities, but the fishery is just one aspect of the economy in The Isles of Notre Dame.

Let's talk about tourism, Mr. Speaker. It is one of the top tourism spots in the Province. We will have 70,000 to 80,000 visitors this summer. Do you know what? They are going to go away with a good experience when they come to Twillingate, when they come to New World Island, when they come to Fogo Island, or Change Islands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: They are going home with a good experience, Mr. Speaker.

We have, Mr. Speaker, dozens and dozens of new businesses related to tourism, around bed and breakfasts, around restaurants –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: We have a thriving economy in the tourism sector. Mr. Speaker, we have a private sector who has made significant investments to build their tourism project.

Beyond that, let's look at Fogo Island, Mr. Speaker. What are we doing? You talk about a commitment to rural Newfoundland and Labrador, a brand new \$50 million ferry, Mr. Speaker, going into Fogo Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Do not stand here and say we do not know what is going on in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. That has been our bread and butter. That is how we survived as a government. We are rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: We are about the backbone of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about Fogo Island and the investment in the Shorefast inn. Our government brought \$9 million to the people of Fogo Island and Change Islands to help build that economy and to help diversify the economy. We have been successful in doing that, no question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Hundreds of jobs, Mr. Speaker, new businesses propping up, new interest in the town in tourism. So now when you go to The Isles of Notre Dame, you do not just pop in for a day or two, you need a couple of weeks. Come in and enjoy what is happening when there are

activities every night, when there are new restaurants to take up, when there is theatre. There are all kinds of things growing out of the tourism industry. Do you know what? This government supports that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: A strong private sector, but this government has laid down the groundwork to build the tourism industry on \$12 million a year in tourism ads, Mr. Speaker. We have created the attention. We have captured the markets, that they need to come to Newfoundland and Labrador.

When you get here, Mr. Speaker, you can go anywhere and enjoy the hospitality of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There are some areas that have grown. You can go down to the Bonavista area, go to the Twillingate area, go to Fogo Island, go up to Gros Morne, or come into St. John's. There are lots of places you can go to experience Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, our government has supported that time and time again. There are many areas, there is no question. I could list areas where other members are from. We have a great product in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the basis of that are the people.

Our people, Mr. Speaker, are absolutely wonderful. They are the ones – when people drive away and they have a tremendous experience, what they talk about most are the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I can tell you when they come to The Isles of Notre Dame, they go away talking about the people as well. I am very proud of it.

I want to speak to that because I think it is a bit shameful and disconnected, Mr. Speaker, for someone here in St. John's to stand up and say we do not understand rural Newfoundland. We are not connected. Well you can pick them out, but make sure you choose them because I can tell you one, as a member of The Isles of Notre Dame and living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, I am not disconnected with rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe in it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the other thing the member raised was education. Do you know what? I would be the first to acknowledge there are challenges in our education system. I spent twenty years in the education system, and I know you spent a long time there as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have had challenges, and we have always had challenges. If we fix all the problems today, we will have more challenges tomorrow. That is our education system. We know that. What the commitments have to be, one is to acknowledge we have challenges, and for two, we need to make progress. We need to find a way to continue to make progress to meet the challenges that are in our education system. Government alone cannot do that, nor can government alone stand and take credit for it. There are a lot of stakeholders in education that play a role.

The successful students, the successful schools, have all those stakeholders engaged, whether it is your principals, the backbones of our schools, the ones who drive and motivate and lay the plans for the school. We have teachers out there who are absolutely fabulous day and night. I know many of them. I can tell you they are incredible.

Then you go down to your special services, whether it is your Ed Psych or your guidance, you have your student assistants, you have your support staff. Then you have your students, front and center, student-based, student needs, make decisions in the best interests of students. Then beyond that you have parents, which play a significant role as well.

Our best schools, with our best outcomes are when the stakeholders are engaged, when the communities are engaged, when parents are involved, when teachers and administrators are committed. I can tell you as well, Mr. Speaker, when it is the district or the Department of Education, that government are committed. I can tell you, our government has been firmly committed to education in this Province, K-12, post-secondary, the list goes on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Now, the member opposite referenced inclusive education. I said, Mr. Speaker, I spent twenty years in education. Of those twenty years, every year I have been a strong advocate and worked with very closely in the area of special services. There are many challenges, no question, but do you know what? There are many victories, many accomplishments, and many great things happening out there, no question about it. I have had emails come, even when the debate is back and forth. I get emails from parents and people who are strong supporters of inclusive education.

Now, there are a few things about inclusive education. What it is, it is an approach around our policies, our practices. The culture of a school is inclusive. I do not think any member should condemn an approach to our education system where we take a very conscious approach, dedicated, committed, to finding ways to ensure that any of our students with exceptionalities, disabilities, are included. We need them included.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. DALLEY: You had your chance, you had your chance.

So, Mr. Speaker, we all support inclusive education, whether it is in the education system, or whether it is in society. It is the model we believe in; it is a model we support. Is that model without challenges? Absolutely not. There are challenges with that model.

One of the myths in inclusive education is that any student with an exceptionality or disability goes in the classroom 100 per cent of the time. That is not the model. Inclusive education is about what is best for the student, building on the strengths and needs of the student in an accepting culture and an accepting environment, where we address the strengths and needs of the student in the classroom; but, there may be times when what is in the best interest of that student is that they are not in the classroom, that they are not included in a certain aspect of the education. Their strengths may be better served, their needs may be better addressed if they are not in the classroom.

That does not mean you are not in a classroom all of the time. That means there are times when you need to do what is best for the student, whether it is to include them or to have them in a separate environment or separate situation, Mr. Speaker. How do you determine all of that? Generally, students with exceptionalities, they have services available to them. Every student in our school system has services available to them, whether it is guidance, educational psychologist, one of the itinerants –

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi to a point of order.

MS MICHAEL: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The member is saying that all of the students with exceptionalities have resources ready for them. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like him to explain why there are people who have been sent home and are at home because the school has told them they do not have the resources to help those children.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I will acknowledge there are challenges and I certainly encourage the member if she has a name of someone who has been sent home by the school, for no reason, I would like to know that and I would gladly look into it.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, in situations of kids with exceptionalities, there are all kinds of challenges. There is a very broad spectrum and where the students are on that spectrum and what their needs are. There may be medical needs where they cannot come to school until 10:00 o'clock in the morning. I was recently out to a school, where we opened up a brand new school, I had a chat with a student and the student does not come in until 10:00 o'clock. We were out in Carbonear, a brand new school out in Carbonear, I finally get a chance to go out and dedicate the school, the students there, the staff, they were wonderful, delighted that we came.

I spoke to a young student who did not get to the ceremony because they do not come to school

until 10:00 o'clock. That is not the schools saying that; that is because of the needs of the child. Any time there is a situation, Mr. Speaker, where kids are home, no question, there is a reason for it, multiple reasons: behaviour, medical. There are things that have to be considered. You cannot just take it and throw it out there and blame it on a school, or blame it on the administrator, because there are other circumstances. What is important in those circumstances – every one of them, and that one if it is one that is actually true or one she is making up. If there are situations like that we have to –

MS MICHAEL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, on a point of order.

MS MICHAEL: (Inaudible) has hinted at my not telling the truth and I want that taken back.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, if she is taking the fact that I implied she lied, I am not. If you feel that way, I certainly take it back. All I am saying is there are situations out there, and I do not believe standing on the floor of the House and cherry-picking one issue when you have 67,000 students, cherry-picking one issue when you have 5,300 teachers, when you have 265 schools to stand here and condemn the education system and government because we have an issue out there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: I offer to the member if there is a situation – I did as well during Estimates. If you have circumstances or situations – and I invite all members, if there are situations out there that are concerning and you do not have the answers and you need some help finding answers or some explanation, I would be only too glad as acting minister, Mr. Speaker, to make sure we get it. Simply because I believe our government's investment in education, I believe our Department of Education, and our

school districts are about one thing and that is students.

Our education system has to be about students. We have to acknowledge the challenges. We have to work together to find a way through it. We will, Mr. Speaker, as we always have. As I said before, there have always been challenges in our education system. I remember them. I remember the different special ed models that were brought in. Some worked well. There were strengths about it that we liked, but there are other things that just were not right. Mr. Speaker, you have to continue to work that and continue to evolve.

An inclusive education ensures that we create programs and policies; we create a school culture that needs to represent society, so that kids with exceptionalities, kids with disabilities are included, they are not segregated, and they feel a part of something. They deserve that, Mr. Speaker. Not only that, every kid in that classroom needs to understand that if we are ever going to evolve as a society where we can put all those differences aside, we have to teach our kids that. What better way to teach them than ensure that we have inclusive classrooms, ensure that we give those kids the same opportunity. We are doing that.

I say again, Mr. Speaker, every kid in the system, every student out there with exceptionality, has services available to them. Are there some situations where they may need more? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, no question, without a doubt. The lady in Alberta who has made the media this week, I do not know what the situation is of her child. I do not know what the needs would be. We have strengths in our system that Alberta does not have; Alberta has strengths in theirs that we do not have. If that situation was presented to the district – and I do not know if it has or not – about how that child could be accommodated in our school system I can tell you, we have dozens, hundreds, come every year from other provinces that are accommodated in our school system.

I know of one in particular that came from Manitoba with an autistic child, and to this day they rave about the supports that they get from our teachers, the commitment from our teachers, the commitment from our special services

programs. They rave about that, about the supports given to their child. It not just the negativity. There are circumstances out there – many, many, many – where there is tremendous success going on in our classrooms and it is because of the inclusive model.

When members condemn the inclusive model, they should think it is not about the model, it is about within the model –

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, on a point of order.

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I have not condemned the inclusion model. I have condemned this government for not putting the resources in place, and it is the parents who are coming to me who are speaking about the problem.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, again, just a couple of points there, just to wrap up about education and how we view education, how I view it as the minister, and the importance of all of us to acknowledging the value of our education system and how well it operates and the stakeholders that are involved and recognizing there are challenges, recognizing we need to take those on, we need to find ways through that. Student assistance support, teacher support, guidance support, special services support, the instructional resource teachers, our administrators, the whole system collectively are working and doing some great things in our education system. I do not want, because there are some situations that are more difficult than others, to leave the impression or to condemn this government for our commitment to education, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely wrong. It is absolutely disingenuous when you condemn the entire system and the people in it because of a few situations, but, as minister, I will continue to work towards those.

The other point that I will make, please, do not stand here and condemn this government about our commitment to rural Newfoundland and

Labrador. We will put our record up against anyone.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the minister his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the concurrence.

I have had the opportunity all afternoon to listen to member after member on the opposite side, from the government, talk about the Official Opposition's lack of openness and transparency, when they should be looking at themselves. This is a government that is continuously hiding the sexual exploitation report. The Premier is refusing to release this document; yet, the minister says: Well, it is anonymous. So why are they standing and hiding behind this very serious issue and not releasing the report?

Also, this is a government that yesterday had voted and concurred in, deemed the Estimates for the Office of Public Engagement, line by line items, all voted on, without being questioned in an Estimates Committee meeting that was scheduled. Then, today gets in the House and the Government House Leader said: The Executive Council Estimates will be debated, and the Office of Public Engagement, on Thursday.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, on a point of order.

MR. KENT: I have listened to the nonsense from the hon. member for a couple of days. I suggest he should show up for Estimates when it is scheduled.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I say to the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, the use of the work nonsense is unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw.

MR. KENT: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The hon. member opposite knows that it is unparliamentary to refer to somebody as being absent from the House. Estimates is an extension of the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader, speaking to the point of order?

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the member opposite reminding us of parliamentary law and procedure. The member has withdrawn his comments.

The member opposite also knows that while Estimates is an extension of the House, it is not the House of Assembly. The House rules apply to the sitting right here in the House of Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say to the member opposite, I clearly showed up and was available to Estimates meetings. Certainly, the Office of Public Engagement, the staff were sent away before Estimates even started. I met them in the doorway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Now, when this happens in the House of Assembly, we will not get the opportunity to debate the Office of Public Engagement because they have already been voted on and people will not be able to question the spending of the office that would have implemented the Access to Information and Privacy Protection Act.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, on a point of order.

MR. KENT: I will answer all of his questions in this House on Thursday, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I want to talk about the Concurrence debates because this is the most secretive and non-transparent government that we have had in the history of the Province.

When we talk about Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development – because the member opposite got up and talked about that the government is committed to rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and I would say they have really fallen off the map for that.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune got up talking about, where does the Official Opposition stand on Muskrat Falls? Muskrat Falls has lots of jobs. This is the megaproject that is going to have tons of jobs. Well, I met

with Nalcor today, the executives of Nalcor, and they said that there are 30,000 people who had applied for these jobs, these little over 3,000 jobs. So there is a lot more work to be done to create employment in Newfoundland and Labrador when you have over 30,000 people looking for work on this project that you cannot deliver on the jobs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Then when we look at the overall piece of where this government stands on its track record, the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde got up and clearly said where this government, and where the leader of the Province right now, the Premier had taken over office in September when business confidence was at its highest in the country and now it is number six. It is tanking, it is going down. Under the leadership of this government, it is going down significantly.

In the Budget, what do they bring in? They bring in a job killing HST hike. That is going to be a tax on people. It is a tax on every good and service, basically, that is being purchased here in the Province. It hurts business. It hurts economic development and growth. That is quite significant to see where this government is. We do not see them in their Budget where they are talking about jobs and the economy.

You talk about forestry. Forestry has been brought up quite a bit lately. Government gave two sentences to it in the Budget – two sentences. The minister, I have asked time and time again for the official job numbers and how the department has calculated 5,500 jobs in forestry when their own documents say otherwise.

In 2008, their own records say the maximum that the whole industry – indirect, the direct with the sawmills and everything that is there – would be 3,000 jobs. Then when I spoke to the

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, on a point of order.

MR. GRANTER: Yes, very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

I presented those numbers to the House of Assembly and also requested a meeting. I have agreed for my department officials to sit down with the hon. member for a meeting. So it is ridiculous he would stand in the House and get on with that this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: I have certainly requested that meeting and can confirm it, but it has not yet been confirmed. So I am looking forward to meeting with the officials on that and to get the accurate numbers. They are certainly not reflective of what the industry and what every other document – even government's endorsed economist, Dr. Wade Locke, is saying otherwise.

When I was in Estimates, and after Estimates and speaking to the CEO of the Agrifoods Agency, they claim the value-added market exploded. There are over 1,100 jobs in value added now, despite a mill being closed, despite the inactivity in forestry, despite all kinds of cutbacks that are happening in the industry.

British Columbia is thriving as a province. It is leading the way in business confidence. It has not focused, like this government has, on oil. It is focused on its forestry and its non-renewables. In that way, that creates real value. This government has not.

This government invested in a forestry diversification program, where my Member for Bay of Islands had talked about putting this money on the Great Northern Peninsula, and not being able to see it create real economic value. That is a significant problem for the 400 people who worked on the Great Northern Peninsula.

This is a government that said, well, we have gone back to the drawing board. I have a letter here from the minister of forestry saying that it is going back, and hopefully we will have reinstatement of this plant by spring of 2015. Another missed timeline. We do not see where the commitment is from this government for the Great Northern Peninsula on where they are going to be to create jobs and opportunity in forestry, that is for sure.

They are silent on the issue. They are not willing to address it. There is no date on the letter either. So this is an open, transparent, and accountable government. How often do you get a letter from an official that is not date-stamped, that is not sent electronically, and that is just left without a date? Not open, not accountable.

AN HON. MEMBER: Humber Valley Paving.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Yes, Humber Valley Paving was a prime example of this information as well.

Now, the big game licence, we have seen in this Budget an attack completely on rural Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to resident hunters and when it comes to non-resident hunters. Everybody is going to be paying more for moose, caribou, and bear – any type of hunting licence, there is a new fee attached, because this is a government that likes to tax, tax, tax, and take money out of people's pockets.

That is not going to give you strong economic or business development. The outfitting industry, a number of them have written me and have said I am going to be out \$13,000, I am going to be out \$20,000 this year; so I am not able to do these upgrades, I am not able to give this wage increase or I am not able to do certain things, because this government's short-sighted decision has had an impact on my business.

These are the types of things that we are hearing. So when you look at the track record over the last twelve years of this government it is quite dire, it is very dire when you look at the economy and you look at business. You only have to look at the Rentech deal that never is; it is not there. When it comes to the Central timberlands of 2009 where you have

expropriated all this fibre and you let it sit idle, you have no value or no business plan for where you can create new opportunities. Where is this forestry integrated management plan, where you can make all players work together in an integrated model?

The minister opposite got up and he talked about his district. I visited his district on Change Islands just a short time ago, less than a month, and I had met with the *Manolis L* committee, the citizens' committee that are concerned – and the minister not once mentioned *Manolis L* when he stood up just now – not once.

I was at that meeting – and I have written a letter. I have written another letter to the minister, the federal minister, and I am going to continue to press for this to be cleaned up. We need to see the oil removed, but we are seeing such a weak stance from the Fisheries Minister and from the Environment Minister on this matter. They are not able to have a relationship in Ottawa. They are not able to work with the federal government to find solutions when it comes to *Manolis L*.

We look at our fishery and we see the LIFO policy in Northern shrimp. We see the inequality in the food fishery. We see the failure when it comes to marine search and rescue and the closure of the Coast Guard in St. John's and also to be closed in St. Anthony. We see the softening of the CETA deal now where they said oh yes, we support CETA; we are willing to forego our \$400 million fish fund. They did not budget \$120 million in the Budget at all for it anyway. They do not have custodial management.

We debated the halibut situation, which we certainly need to see more action from government. I have not seen the Minister of Fisheries go to Ottawa yet, but table a resolution in the House. We need to see a lot more action when it comes to how you are going to get things done and find solutions for the fishery so that the workers there get results. We see a lot of talk on this side, but very little action when it comes to the fishery from the minister on the other side. We need to see that. They are softening their stance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: I sat in an Estimates Committee meeting on the Government Purchasing Agency –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – and the minister, the Deputy Premier, got up and said in that Estimates Committee meeting that when it comes to the agreement on internal trade, which is about mobility of jobs, doing more procurement, more opportunities with the cross-jurisdictions across the country, we are not at the table. We are not at the table because of the CETA disagreement. So now that the –

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, on a point of order.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I am glad he made it for a portion of the meeting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My constituents and the people certainly know where I stand on issues and that I am available and accessible. I would say to the member opposite, I have asked for repeatedly, to him as the Deputy Premier, to the Government House Leader's staff, to the Clerk's Office of the House of Assembly for an Estimates meeting to be rescheduled for the Office of Public Engagement because the Deputy Premier sent his staff out of a three-hour Estimates meeting. So that did not happen. Whatever he says about me being in attendance or not, I spoke to his staff in the doorway saying they would be back and they are not back. So that is the reality.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services standing on a point of order?

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, he should have shown up when it was scheduled.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I certainly showed up for that Estimates meeting when it was scheduled, but he sent his staff out.

MR. KENT: Because you were not available – because you were not there.

MR. MITCHELMORE: I am not going to get into his pettiness when it comes to this. He obviously does not want to look at the Office of Public Engagement and have the scrutiny that it needs and deserves.

Now, if we look at agriculture, we look at farming, we look at the failed strategy when it comes to looking at making more agricultural land available. When we look at our natural area and climate, we should be a haven for sheep farming in Newfoundland and Labrador, yet we have less than 1,000 sheep here. We have so many problems when it comes to looking at how we can grow –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – renewable natural industries that have sustained us for centuries, when it comes to the fishery, when it comes to forestry, when it comes to farming.

What the members opposite talk about are some of the educational programs that are implemented in the classroom – and that is great, but we need to see real, tangible growth when it

comes to looking at where the jobs are going to be in the communities that we represent.

I represent a very rural district that has been decimated, that has seen job loss after job loss under the leadership of this government and their direction, and their failure. They have cut the Regional Economic Development Boards. We have seen places where like New World Island's district association has to sell of their assets, and where Lewisporte district association had to close their office doors.

So when you make those types of cuts – and then the member opposite talks about the ferry that is coming, this \$50 million ferry, to Fogo Island and Change Islands, but he did not include the tariffs because of his bad management skills and the style. Twenty-five million dollar tariffs that are going to cost the taxpayers of the Province because this government chose to go with another company versus going with a company that was a lower cost, had a free trade agreement, and had the quality and had experience with making ships for Newfoundland waters, as the Member for St. John's South has pointed out previously.

The people of the Province are really sick and tired of seeing bad management over and over and over, poor decisions, seeing job losses, seeing their taxes increase, seeing the HST being put on – it is unbelievable, unbelievable, and it is a real problem.

There is a real problem with the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services will not release a report on sexual exploitation for people of the Province, will not answer any questions that are directed towards him in the House of Assembly today. So, if the member wants to get up and talk he will have that opportunity, because the members opposite certainly took lots of my time – they must not like what I am saying, Mr. Speaker. They took lots of time in points of order that made no sense, that showed their inability to really manage, to listen, to really hear the concerns of the people that I represent in The Straits – White Bay North. That is a problem.

When it comes to looking at the Environment and Conservation portfolio, beyond the environment on the *Manolis L*, this government,

under the minister, has a very terrible track record of accepting liability after liability after liability.

They have accepted liabilities of the AbitibiBowater sites, which we do not know what the costs were. It was listed at \$264 million. Come By Chance, they still do not even know what those liabilities are. After the company has been in operation it has to go through several more phases. The minister has admitted, we still have not done the work. Well, if you do not do the work, you should not be able to get a promotion or stay where you are. You have to do the hard work.

When we look at natural resources and we look at the mining sector and all the jobs that are being lost in Lab West with the downturn in the mining sector. We see the rally that took place and the workers standing strong and united, and seeing the Leader of the Official Opposition there speaking out and supporting the workers there. Where was the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs? Where was the Premier? The Premier was out having a fundraising dinner, not looking out for the workers of Lab West, I say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: When we look at energy efficiency, we have seen where they cut programs. We have seen in climate change where the strategy that has been put forward will not meet targets. We have not seen an update when it comes to sector-by-sector targets and how you can achieve getting below the 1990 levels by 2020. This is just going to be pushed off, pushed off, and pushed off.

Is this going to be another thing that is pushed off like the Waste Management Strategy where now it is five more years before you get there because you cannot get the job done? That is what the Member for Bay of Islands continuously brings up, brought up, and raised about the inability for Don Downer and others who are on the West Coast committee to be able to fully put forward a strategy. To see that this is taking five more years before we deal with the issues.

We have people on the Northern Peninsula, on the South Coast in Labrador who are not going to be able to deal with this because you are not putting in the appropriate plan. They are going to have to pay more and more out of pocket. That is what this government and that is what this Budget is all about. It is about taking money out of people's pockets, it is about cutting jobs, and it is about increasing spending that is unsustainable.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to stand here this afternoon to speak on the Concurrence and sitting on the Estimates Committee. I just want to speak – and I am not going to mention anything else that the Member for The Straits – White Bay North had to say, but in his last few seconds there, he spoke about the rally in Labrador West. He said how the Leader of the Opposition was in there side by side with all the workers, hurrahing with the workers.

The Leader of the Third Party was also in there, and the comment of the Leader of the Third Party, I am going to mention that first. He was there with both fists pumping. His comment disturbed me, and I have no doubt it disturbed some of the other people who were walking in that walk, was that if and when I get elected, as the Leader of the NDP party, then the first place I am coming back to is Labrador West.

The Leader of the Opposition was in there and he spoke, and I have to give credit. He was very, very registered with his comments. He was very registered. The Labrador MP was in there and made very appalling comments I thought, but when I got up to that microphone, and I do not mind saying it, I was booed off a

stage. I was booed off a stage when I stood on that with that crowd.

The point I made very clear was that when I am there, I have been there for thirty-eight years and I am part of that community. I live in that community, and I will be there for many years to come as part of that community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: I did not fly in and make a political appearance and then fly out again. I did not do that, and I knew what I was walking in to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: I knew what I was walking in to, but I let the people of Labrador West know, I have been there with you for thirty-eight years and I plan on being there for a long time – not what the Leader of the Opposition did, nor what the unelected Leader of the Third Party did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. John's North, on a point of order.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am wondering where the Premier and the Minister of Labrador Affairs was when they were having the rally in Labrador West. Maybe the member for that area could tell us where the Premier and the Minister of Labrador Affairs were.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

I have no problem answering the member's question across the way. The Premier and the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs were doing their job representing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. On this side, when you are elected to represent the people in a district, as being part of a team on this side, we do exactly that. As the Member for Labrador West, I was there representing the government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: That answers his question. Anyway, I just lost three-and-a-half minutes making that point clear.

I now want to talk about the Estimates Committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: It was a pleasure to sit on the Estimates Committee. I sat on the Resource Committee, which had six different departments that we listened to on the Estimates. It is very interesting to be able to sit on that Committee –

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. John's North, on a point of order.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, is the member saying that the Leader of the Official Opposition should not have accepted the union's invitation to fly up there and participate and support them in their rally?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation.

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That does not even qualify an answer, I will have him know. The political staging is unbelievable.

MR. KIRBY: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: Mr. Speaker, this Committee that we sat on for the Estimates Committee, as I was saying, we listened to the Estimates for six different departments. It is really, really interesting because it gives the Opposition parties an opportunity to question the minister, as well as the minister's staff, an opportunity to go line for line. Sitting there on the Committee, I think it is an education in itself, because you learn so much about the different departments. I think it is a great process.

I was also very interesting to see the line of questioning. Some members will actually come in and they will go line for line. I was a bit blown away when one member came in and asked questions on policy during the whole three-hour period. In the last ten minutes, then that member argued because the minister said: Well, your time is up. We have been here for three hours. I am more than willing to meet with you. Send me the questions you have on the line by line, but you just spent three hours asking questions on policy. The member argued that you are not giving us the time. It was really interesting to see the different formats of the way questions were asked during the Estimates Committee.

I just want to go down through and touch briefly on some of the different departments that the Resource Committee touched on and the questions that were asked there. The first one is Advanced Education and Skills. We went down through the Advanced Education and Skills. I thought a lot of people, especial those listening on the TV, they sometimes are wondering: What does each departure exactly do?

Advanced Education and Skills is, of course, the department that handles all post-secondary education. One of their mandates is to make sure that this Province and government supports highly educated graduates. We want to make

sure that we have the very best coming out through the post-secondary education system, and that government is supporting that. I know in my district certainly skilled workers is a very, very important part of the education system.

I look at just this past couple of months, it has been very important – one of the most challenging pieces I think that I have had is the placement of skilled workers from within my district to other parts of the Province, mainly two of the main parts, of course, being Muskrat Falls in the Muskrat Falls Project, and the Long Harbour project, where there is a high demand for skilled workers. With the downturn in the economy in Labrador West right now, these are two very important parts within the Province that there is a high demand for skilled workers, and that certainly affects my district.

So the Department of Advanced Education and Skills part of their mandate is to make sure that we are putting and supporting these skilled workers into the system. Although – and you will hear people talk about the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador right now, we are compared quite often to the economy in Alberta. Last week we heard there are 18,000-plus people going to be laid off in Alberta.

I was talking to some of my constituents – that is actually over double the amount of the population in my district, but the economy is still growing, and diversifying the economy is something that we need to do. I know in my district, for example, just this morning there was a tender awarded concerning the tailings on the Wabush Mines tailings. To hear that is very good news, because that diversifies the unemployment situation right now in Labrador West, and it is going to create jobs for people in Labrador West. To see it go to a local company, of course – that award went to a local company, and that local company has said that they will give first opportunity to the laid off workers or the dependants of laid off workers from Wabush Mines. So it is really good to see that those things are happening, and that communication and co-operation is there.

Through Advanced Education and Skills, when Wabush Mines first closed down, the former minister, the Member for Gander, was on the ground with four other ministers immediately to

make sure that we met with the union, we met with the workers, we met with the company, we met with the municipal leaders there to see what are the next steps, what can we do now to get the community through this transition – and that is still in the works.

For example, just last week, there were officials from Advanced Education and Skills in on the ground meeting with local organizations. They met with CAP. They met with the different organizations that are there, the task force that deals directly with the economy in Labrador. Advanced Education and Skills were in there again. Advanced Education and Skills are in meeting with the college right now to see how we can make the changes in the college system to better adhere to what is needed within the region.

I heard, during Question Period today, that was mentioned, and I know that in my district the changes that are being made within the College of the North Atlantic, for example, are being made for the betterment of the communities and the economy that is around that.

Advanced Education and Skills deals with the student financial assistance. They deal with apprenticeship programs. Also, within that department, they deal with Income Support. That is something, dealing with the Income Support, it gets people over hurdles. It gets them through some of the transitions that they have to deal with. When you think about it, through Advanced Education and Skills if you have people who are on Income Support – and there is one individual in my district again that we worked with. She was on Income Support and we worked with her, through Advanced Education and Skills, so that today she is working full time. She recently purchased a home and is raising two children on her own, but doing it very successfully. A lot of that credit goes to the Advanced Education and Skills department with the work that they did with that one individual that I mentioned.

One of the other departments that we looked at is Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. This one, I guess because of my background in tourism and certainly as a small businessperson – this department, their mandate is to improve the economic, tourism, culture and

innovation agenda within the Province. They want to strengthen and diversify the economy, and I think they do that well.

I heard the Member for Humber East talk today in Question Period about it was over 100 accommodators within the Province that are unlicensed. I know because I worked with that particular member in the tourism industry. He is very much aware of how Canada Select works. I just want to point it out that Canada Select is the one that actually monitors and licenses the accommodations within the Province. They decide if they are going to be licensed or not.

MR. FLYNN: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

If the member wants to be recognized, he has to stand in his own seat.

MR. FLYNN: I apologize, Mr. Speaker (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Humber East is standing on a point of order.

MR. FLYNN: I would like to correct the Member for Lab West. The Canada Select grades them; the Province is responsible for licensing them. They just send the information in.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will agree to disagree with the member because if the grading – because I will clarify what he is saying. When Canada Select does not pass a grade, there is no licence. So it depends upon the grading that Canada Select actually makes whether a licence is there or not. If Canada Select does not give a passing grade, there is no licence. That is the way that is.

That has always been an issue. It is pushing that tourism industry that we worked – and I have to say that the Member for Humber East, I am not quite sure if he was the President of the tourism association at the time, but he certainly sat as an executive member when those decisions were made. I cannot quite remember whether he was the president at the time or not, but he certainly was an executive member sitting when those decisions were made. This government felt that that arm's-length Canada Select group was the best way to go.

It shows that we are moving forward. I guess my point there is the inclusivity that we are using. This government includes people. I hear so often that we do not consult, but we do consult and we do include. I think it is really important that we do that.

I also heard the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde speak about CFIB. He talked about small businesses and referred to how he was a former small businessman. Again, I just want to clarify a point because I am also a former small business man. When things are booming and everything is going well, you tend to have less small businesses trying to improve. I see it in my district right now where the larger industry – and Labrador West is known as a one-industry town. When the larger industry is going really well, the spinoff to the smaller businesses flows easier, but it is when the crunch gets hard that the small businesses also find it very difficult. I see it in my district right now.

As an example, a lot of the small businesses such as the hoteliers, the restaurateurs, the corner stores, are now looking for ways they can diversify to pick up the business they are losing. That is when the red tape becomes a little heavier. I felt he gave the impression that, well, government was moving forward and the red tape had decreased. Then all of a sudden government sat back and just let it go to the wayside.

I would argue that it is not that government is sitting back and letting the red tape issues go to the wayside, it is because when you have a downturn in the larger economy, then the smaller industries are working that much harder to try and diversify because their businesses are affected also. Therefore, there is more red tape

added to it. There are, I guess, two ways of looking at how that works.

I am a strong, strong advocate for tourism in the Province. As we know, right now it is a billion dollar industry within our Province. I feel that the tourism industry is alive and well.

I agree with the Member for Humber East, I would love to see that every accommodator in the Province had to be licensed. That is not something government turns a blind eye on. That problem has always been there. We will continue to monitor it as much as we can and, hopefully, eliminate those accommodators who are not registered or licensed. That will be an ongoing issue, and I do not think I would get an argument from the other side.

Natural Resources was another department we had within our Estimates Committee. Again, it was very, very interesting. I certainly compliment the minister on the way he answered the questions. I guess because my district is affected heavily by the Department of Natural Resources, it was very interesting to sit down and listen. There were some very good questions, both on line items as well as policy asked within the Natural Resources Estimates. I thought the minister went above and beyond answering and explaining the rationale of quite a bit of the items that were brought forward there. It was an eye opener for all of us.

Fisheries and Aquaculture was another one. For me that was an education because, of course, within my district, fisheries and aquaculture is not something that I would deal with. Also, I guess growing up in St. John's I did not deal with fisheries and aquaculture. So there was a lot to learn there. It was great to be able to sit in and listen to what was happening within that department.

I spoke about Advanced Education and Skills. The Environment and Conservation one – I realize I am running out of time. I guess one of the best examples I can give when we talk about diversity and we talk about departments that are trying to find new ways, I am very proud to say that within my district, which is certainly rural – I guess it is put down as a rural-urban district – we just got passed by the Department of Environment for a slaughterhouse, to move

forward with a slaughterhouse in Labrador West. I think that is excellent, because that is going to create, when it comes through, probably going to create fifty or sixty jobs. A brand new economy in a district right now, that every job counts. That is an example of what happens in environment. There are certainly decisions being made.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I am out of time. Hopefully will get a chance to speak again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The motion is that the report of the Resource Committee be concurred in.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Report of the Resource Estimates Committee, carried.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With agreement of all parties, we will take a short recess for supper and return at around 7:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave to return at 7:00 p.m.

The House is in recess until 7:00. Do you want to say 7:10?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: It is 7:10.

The House is in recess until 7:10 p.m.