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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear members' statements from members representing the Districts of St. John's South, Burgeo – La Poile, Cape St. Francis, Bellevue, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, and Baie Verte – Springdale.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I had the pleasure of attending a D.A.R.E. graduation ceremony at St. John Bosco School in Shea Heights.

D.A.R.E., or Drug Abuse Resistance Education, is a comprehensive prevention education program that covers the health, legal, and social problems encountered when involved with drugs.

The program is designed to equip school children with skills required to resist the social pressures to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, drugs and violence. It is the goal that these acquired skills will assist the students in taking a stand against the illegal use of drugs and therefore giving these students the ability to make healthy and wise choices.

This unique program utilizes uniformed law enforcement officers to teach a formal curriculum to students in a classroom setting and is presently being offered to Grade 6 students who attend school, in this case, by the RNC.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the following students on their graduation from the D.A.R.E. program: Max Benson, Kaylee Churchill, Abigale Coady, Bernie Delaney, Christopher Druken, Aaron Earle, Hailey Earle, Christopher Hatcher-Bragg, Hayley Janes, Tyler Jordan, Patrick Morris, Samantha Mullins, Samantha Noftall, Seamus O'Brien, Olivia Thomlyn, Joshua Watson, Hailey Whitten, Mackenzie Yetman and Dylan Yetman-Sears.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise to recognize and congratulate Leading Edge Credit Union, of Port aux Basques, on being selected as the twelfth best place to work in Atlantic Canada, their fifth time receiving this prestigious recognition.

This honour was designed and bestowed by Progress Magazine and partner, Best Companies Group, to recognize the best employers in the region – those who make it a priority to create better workplaces for their employees. The employers are graded by their own employees.

The Leading Edge Credit Union is led by CEO, Mr. Cory Munden, and their head office is located in Port aux Basques. They have other branches in Corner Brook, Doyles, Jeffrey's, and St. George's. The Leading Edge Credit Union celebrates employees' achievements by giving a Volunteer of the Year Award and an Annual Training Award. Staff receive time-management and financial education training. Employees also enjoy a paid day off on their birthday and an annual overnight staff party. It is great to see a rural Newfoundland and Labrador company thriving and growing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Cory Munden and the staff of the Leading Edge Credit Union on receipt of this prestigious award. It is indeed an honour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a councillor in the Town of Flatrock, Mr. Bob Schiedendorf, who is well known for his environmental commitment and dedication to his community.

Bob is responsible for establishing an environmental committee within the town. He also holds monthly meetings about environmental protection and the value of wetlands and the conservation of species; and he helps promote awareness within the town.

Bob played an important role in signing the Municipal Habitat Stewardship Agreement between the Town of Flatrock and the provincial government which focuses on the importance of wetlands and their habitat. He also organized hikes while promoting the different vegetation and water bodies and land formation in the area.

With his hard work and dedication, and environmental commitment to the community, the town has preserved bodies of water, marsh areas and is able to showcase its natural beauty. The Town of Flatrock is a cleaner and healthier place to live because of his efforts.

I ask all hon. members in this House to join me in thanking Bob Schiedendorf for his contribution to protecting the environment and to congratulate him for being recognized at the Environmental Awards Ceremony on June 5 when he received a lifetime achievement award.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the English Harbour East Lions Club. Nested in the hills of the bottom of Fortune Bay is a small scenic town of English Harbour East. Small towns such as this show a lot of passion and pride. Their stature, as a small town, is that of a larger town.

This town's Lions Club has twenty-two members. This year they celebrated their 29th Annual Charter night and I had the privilege of attending.

Lions Clubs do a lot of fundraising and volunteering. The money they raise goes back to the community. The English Harbour East Lions Club this year donated over \$18,000 to those battling cancer, to those in hospital, and other charities. In the District of Bellevue, we also currently have Lions Clubs in Dildo, Arnold's Cove, Come By Chance, Sunnyside, and Terrenceville.

Mr. Speaker, there is no other organization in these communities that does as much to help others as the Lions Clubs, and I would recommend anyone who wants to make a difference to join this organization.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Lions Club of English Harbour East and in thanking all Lions Clubs for the great job they do.

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 in this hon. House today to deliver accolades to Sommer MacDonald, a Level III student at John Watkins Academy in Hermitage-Sandyville, for her fabulous success at the Lions Club Multi-Level Speak-Off held in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia at the end of May.

Competing against students from New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and three counties from Maine, Sommer made headlines when she was named top speaker in Atlantic Canada. Congratulations to this very bright and skilled young lady, whose poise and natural speaking ability garnered her top honour. We are so very proud of Sommer for her excellent speech delivery and commend her for her courage to speak from the heart.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Sommer for representing the Lions District N3, her school and community, and our Province with such finesse. Sommer's passion to promote global issues amongst teens helps us all be more aware of social injustices, and I encourage her to continue to help build a better world for everyone.

Well done, Sommer. Congratulations and the best of luck with your plans to study naval architecture at Marine Institute later this year.

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.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize three gifted athletes. At the annual School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador awards ceremony, Emily Edison, daughter of Dave and Lisa Edison of Springdale, captured the Female Athlete of the Year award.

Emily, a Level III Indian River High School student, is an elite athlete who participated extensively in school and community sports.

The 1st Female Runner Up was Brittany Andrews, daughter of Boyd and Tammie Andrews of Kings Point. Brittany, a Level III Valmont Academy student, is also a very dedicated athlete who contributed immensely to her school program.

Christian Pelley, son of Paul and Sharon Pelley of Springdale, another Indian River High School student, brought home the 2nd Runner Up title in the male division.

It is important to note that all three athletes, while juggling their busy schedules, maintain a very high academic record. Their parents, teacher coaches, and communities are to be commended for the pivotal role each played in the success of Emily, Brittany, and Christian. I

am sure numerous sacrifices were made to accommodate their athletic events.

I invite all members to join me in congratulating Emily, Brittany, and Christian upon their achievements and wish them success in their chosen careers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I go to statements by ministers I just want to welcome to the public gallery Mr. John Hillier who is the son of the Member for Conception Bay South.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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 today to report on yesterday's Trade Renewal Ministers' Meeting, which took place in conjunction with the full round of internal trade negotiations ongoing this week in Toronto.

This was the first meeting of ministers responsible for trade in four years and it was a productive meeting. With nine provincial and territorial ministers in attendance, we were in agreement on the need to aggressively pursue a revised and new Agreement on Internal Trade, or AIT as it is referred. At their 2014 summer meeting, Canada's Premiers agreed to undertake a comprehensive renewal of the agreement, using the existing AIT and considering the desire to ensure more consistency with modern international trade agreements.

Mr. Speaker, Canada's economy is a healthy and competitive one. As a Province, we need to be at our best as well. AIT is the most ambitious internal trade agreement that this country has ever seen.

The provincial government is pleased to be involved in the renegotiation of the AIT and looks forward to continued collaboration with other provinces and territories to reach a modernized AIT that has far-reaching benefits for Newfoundland and Labrador and indeed the entire country.

The opportunity to address the long-standing barriers to the interprovincial transmission of energy goods in Canada is a primary motivating factor for Newfoundland and Labrador in these negotiations.

Fair and transparent access to markets is the primary goal of trade agreements, and the AIT must be no different. This principle must extend to energy markets as such resources must be afforded free and transparent access to interprovincial transmission infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, during our meeting we were joined by the Business Alliance, representing the business community. The alliance raised important issues facing businesses, specifically regulatory barriers that impact the ability to efficiently carry out commerce across the country. This was valuable insight to the group, and rest assured, we will take a progressive and comprehensive approach to internal trade.

Newfoundland and Labrador fully supports modernization of the Agreement on Internal Trade so that it better aligns with Canada's international trade agreement, and applies to all sectors of the economy for the benefit of all provinces and territories.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We are delighted to see the Province is getting back to the negotiating table when it comes to trade agreements. It is interesting to note that this is the first meeting in four years. At this rate, the pace of progress will indeed be slow. The Agreement on Internal Trade which focuses on relationships between provinces and territories is a critical one, certainly as important as the CETA deal.

Mr. Speaker, a modern-day economy, a first-world economy cannot live in isolation and there is no way we can claim to be open for business and invite the world to invest here when we are not able to come to terms with our neighbouring provinces.

Mr. Speaker, the Business Alliance has long been complaining about the barriers they face trying to do business province to province. This is negatively impacting on expansion opportunities for small- and medium-sized business in our Province. Having them present at this meeting is a good thing. I only hope that the ideas that are presented are truly considered by the minister's committee.

We applaud the ministers for finally getting together and addressing the internal trade agreement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I am very glad that government is taking full part in these trade talks. It is good to know that the trade ministers are agreed on renegotiating the agreement.

The minister's statement is a bit short on details. I see no indication from him of whether or not they think they can reach the goal of a new internal trade regime by March 2016. I certainly hope they can.

I do urge the minister, as their talks continue, to make sure that the AIT benefits well the workers

of this Province and now just the corporate sector.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission conducts an annual Safe Work Video/Radio Ad Contest which is open to Grade 7-12 junior and senior high school students. The contest encourages students to develop a video or radio ad to create awareness on preventing workplace injuries and illnesses.

I am delighted to rise today in this hon. House to congratulate eight students from Holy Heart High School, Marystown Central High School, and Appalachia High School who were recently honoured for their creativity in developing young worker safety video and radio ads as part of the 2015 contest.

Ethan Bickford, Devin Kelly, and Michael Lawlor of Holy Heart High School in St. John's captured top spot for the 2015 video ad. Their video has been forwarded to the national *It's Your Job* Youth Video Contest. Marissa Walsh and Cole Inkpen of Marystown Central High School were given top honours for the radio ad component. Each winning entry received \$1,000.

The top ten entries selected by the judges were entered into a Viewer's Choice competition where the general public could vote via Facebook for their favourite safety video. The winning entry was created by Helen Pittman, Eric White, and Jacob MacDonald of Appalachia High School, St. Georges, and they shared the \$500 prize. The top ten video finalists can be viewed on the Safe Work NL YouTube channel, and the winning video will air on Rogers Television. The winning radio ad will be re-recorded and aired on radio stations throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, the 2014 injury rate among those aged fifteen to twenty-four remained steady at 1.5 per 100 workers, which is lower than the provincial injury rate. It is a good indicator that our awareness efforts are having a positive impact, but it is imperative that both government and employers continue the focus on workplace safety for young workers in our Province. The Safe Work Video/Radio Ad Contest, along with other initiatives such as the trivia game show SAFE Work NL's – *Who Wants to Save a Life?* and the high school course Workplace Safety 3220, are important components of our overall awareness campaign.

We remain focused on creating a culture of safety in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we understand the importance of instilling these values at an early age. It is our continued hope that initiatives like the Safe Work Video/Ad Contest will help our future workforce to understand and create safe work habits that will guide them throughout their careers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We here in the Official Opposition want to certainly recognize this initiative. I think it is a great initiative, and we want to congratulate the winners of the contest.

Anything you can do to promote health and safety is a positive thing. We know that many of the injuries we see in the workplaces are attributed to new workers, to young workers, so it is important at a young age we establish health and safety as a priority for young people.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not say, though, that it is one thing to do this, and it is a great initiative, but if the government is truly serious about health and safety in this Province, then it would look at doing things – as we have talked about before – such as ensuring we have OHS inspectors in Lab West, ensuring they get their silica dust studies done on time; ensuring

that we are doing inspections of fishing vessels, the most dangerous industry in the world; ensuring we have the fish processor's safety council up and running, that they announced three years ago. When workers get injured, we would ensure that we have a system to protect them, not the broken system we have at workers' comp right now, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. Congratulations to the young people who won this year's competition and congratulations to everyone who participated. That means a lot.

While I am pleased the injury rate for young workers is lower than the provincial injury rate, they are both still too high, Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the minister would agree. Young people are more likely to not know the importance of worker safety and are also less likely to know of their rights as workers. We need to be doing more to fix these matters. Whether in this hon. House or in a school, restaurant, a kitchen, Mr. Speaker, we have to emphasize three things: worker health and safety, worker health and safety, and finally, worker health and safety.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Approximately 800 Wabush Mines retirees were dealt a severe blow with the cancellation of their medical benefits and life insurance as a result of Cliffs, Eastern Canada, going into bankruptcy

protection. The future of their pension supplements may also be affected, and government has been silent on this issue. On top of that, the local union office closed two weeks ago.

I ask the Premier: What specifically is government doing to help resolve the situation in Wabush?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we are certainly aware of the situation in Wabush and certainly feel for the retirees, the pensioners, and the workers who have been laid off, but provincial law requires that pension funds be held in a separate trust.

So, Mr. Speaker, the money is safe in the pension plans. They will still have to make payments – the company will still have to make payments to pensioners as time goes on. We have retained legal counsel in the Province of Quebec to make sure that the interests of the Province and the interests of the pensioners and the workers are looked after, Mr. Speaker.

Again, our responsibility within Service NL is to make sure that we are taking care of business when it comes to this issue.

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.

Well, the union was in a Montreal court yesterday requesting an order for Cliffs Resources to fulfill its obligations to Wabush Mines retirees regarding not only their pension plan but the medical benefits as well, which is a big part of this issue right now, and the issue of pension supplements. These are people who have worked very hard with that company and virtually gave their lives to the Lab West area.

I ask the Premier: What discussions have you had with the United Steelworkers and Cliffs Resources on this particular issue?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, benefits are negotiated by unions with companies that they work for. Unfortunately, these types of benefits are not protected by legislation or law. They are not incorporated into that protected area.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that we should take some comfort in is that the pension plans for the union plan is 92 per cent funded. So that is not too bad a number. The money that is in that fund is protected. Also, the salary plan is about 89 per cent funded, and that was registered with our Superintendent of Pensions just late last year.

Mr. Speaker, there is a bit of comfort in that. It is not fully funded, but that money is protected. The money is safe.

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.

In a lot of cases, the role of government is to actually step in and help facilitate meetings and discussions that could occur. My question was really around, has this government – I ask the Premier, have you stepped in to meet with the United Steelworkers and Cliffs Resources? They still have some very active companies in other parts of the world.

Have you stepped in, have you asked for a meeting with the United Steelworkers union and Cliffs Resources?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are very difficult circumstances down in Labrador West. I know the member opposite shares in the concern and the seriousness of what is happening in Labrador West. It is greatly impacted by worldwide commodity prices. We know there are still ongoing challenges with the IOC operation down there.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of AES has been on the ground and working with workers and worker representatives on the ground there as well. The Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development has been down there as well in working with them. We have a ministerial committee in place that is there to work and partner hand in hand with the community to show support to the significant impact on their greater community. We will stand by with the workers and do everything we can to assist that community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier talked a lot about co-operation and being on the ground in Lab West.

So my question now is about – this government has admitted that they have accepted a closure plan for Wabush Mines, however, this plan has still not been shared with the Town of Wabush. That is not co-operation, I say to the Premier. Two weeks ago, the minister said he would check and let the Town of Wabush know.

I ask the Premier: Why have you not shared this plan with the Town of Wabush, since you say to be co-operating with the people in Lab West?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, there is no question, in situations like this co-operation is important, and we have seen that. Certainly through my department, we have had contact

with Cliffs Resources, we have had contact with the unions, and we have had contact with the leadership in the community of Wabush. I have been working with them for a long time now through these issues.

With respect to the legislation and what is required under legislation. Mr. Speaker, Cliffs are meeting their obligations under the legislation, but within that, the rehab and closure plan and what is involved particularly around the dust issue, we are having discussions with the town. There are contracts to address that, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated before, what we can share with the town, we certainly plan to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To provide some clarification for the people in Wabush, I would like for the minister or the Premier to explain: What is it really about the closure plan of a mine in their backyard in the Town of Wabush that you could not share with the Town of Wabush? There must be something more than you are saying. What is it you could not share, and why?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing any more than what I am saying. There is nothing about hiding anything. This is an agreement, and under the legislation there is only so much of that information you are able to allow, whether it is commercially sensitive or otherwise.

We have no issue, Mr. Speaker. What we are permitted to, under the legislation, to share with the people of Wabush, to share with the community leadership, we absolutely have no issue doing that.

What is important here, Mr. Speaker, is that there are some issues on the ground in Wabush. They are going to need government to support

them. As we have done since the beginning, we will continue to support with them, share whatever information we can, and do all we can to support, whether it is the pensioners, whether it is issues on rehab and closure, or whether it is issues around some other operator having an interest in the mine. Mr. Speaker, we will be there to help them out and do all we can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister said two weeks ago that he would check and he would let the town know, so obviously that part has not been done. They went ahead and accepted the closure plan without consultations with the Town of Wabush.

I ask the minister: When will you share the information that you have with the Town of Wabush?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will not give a date, because dates have been hard to come by here in this House, but I will say to the member opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: – that I appreciate his concerns and I certainly share the concerns as well, as we do as a government, and we intend to meet with the Town of Wabush and share information that they need. There has been a continuous flow of information, in terms of whether it is phone conversations, letters from the town, and responses.

There are a lot of issues, multiple issues, whether it is rehab and closure, pension issues, benefit issues, other interested parties, the long-term contracts, and we are engaged with the community and the union on these issues, and

continue to support them in trying to find some resolution.

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.

Well, some ministers have no problem getting a date. We heard about that just yesterday.

So, Mr. Speaker, our Province has the highest rate of diabetes in Canada, and it continues to climb. There are over 57,000 people with diabetes in the Province today, and sadly, the numbers are expected to reach over 82,000 in the next ten years. Diabetes is expected to cost this Province between \$300 million and \$400 million annually by 2020.

So I ask the Premier: We have been calling on a diabetes registry, a diabetes database for years. Recognizing this growing issue, why have you not established a diabetes registry in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks to my colleagues as well.

As I outlined to members opposite during Estimates, Mr. Speaker, we have made great progress on this database since the last time the issue came up in the House of Assembly. We have been working closely with the regional health authorities and the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information. We have formed a clinical working group. We have some key outcome indicators to be monitored. Data sources are linked and being drawn in, and we will have test reports for the database later this month.

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, later this month – it is June 2015, and this goes back to the 2010 Auditor General’s report when he warned that government was not doing a good job in fulfilling its leadership role in preventing and managing diabetes. They still are not, and diabetes rates and costs continue to climb.

In their 2011 Blue Book, whether it was a commitment, a promise, or some form of guideline, this government recognized the need to capture acute diabetes data. In 2015, still no diabetes registry.

So I ask the Premier: Since you recognized it in 2011, four years ago, why is this important piece of work taking so long?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, work began on the diabetes database back in 2012. Western Health was actively involved in a pilot, in a model, that we hoped to roll out across the Province. We have since gotten the other regional health authorities involved. We have the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information involved. As I said, later this month test reports from the database will be available.

We are making great progress. We are going to be able to monitor trends related to the prevalence of diabetes. We are going to be able to monitor the quality of care for clients who have diabetes. We are going to monitor outcomes for residents with diabetes. We are making good progress. I am pleased with the level of co-operation from the regions and the Centre for Health Information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, some residents of Deer Lake have filed a class action lawsuit claiming property damage

by water seeping from the Deer Lake Power canal. Government is named in this lawsuit.

I ask the Premier: What responsibility does government have in this situation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition alluded to the subject is an active court case so there is only so much we can really say about it.

As a regulator we take responsibility for making sure that the Deer Lake Power Company, making sure that the Town of Deer Lake, the residents in the area, are aware of exactly what is going on. In fact, we did a study ourselves, Mr. Speaker. It is a technical report. It is available online. It was prepared by my department and that report recommends steps to be taken to help alleviate the situation, certainly in the short term. We are certainly looking for longer term solutions as well.

So in terms of taking responsibility, we will continue to work with all the stakeholders and work with the Town of Deer Lake in particular and Deer Lake Power.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, on Monday when questioned on the leaking oil on the Port au Port Peninsula the minister stated, “Even though we did not receive a complaint directly or any information directly, we heard about it on social media. We heard about it on Thursday, June 4.”

I ask the minister why he claimed to be unaware given Environment Ministers, a former Premier, and numerous Cabinet ministers were informed and aware about the leaking oil over the course of the last two years.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, if there is any issue that my department has been more proactive on, I cannot find it. We have been very proactive on this issue. Over the last couple of years when we heard reports of oil, we have went out. We have sent our people out there –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: – our technical people, our scientists, our biologists to have a look to see what was going on.

Mr. Speaker, again, there is natural seepage of oil in that area. It has been going on since the beginning of time. We know that there is seepage happening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: It is happening naturally. The observances that our people have seen there in the past, Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years has been minimal. There has been sheen on the water some days and other days not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, there is no definitive clue as to what is going on, but now we have new evidence and we are looking into it further.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: The minister certainly has a different definition for proactivity than I. It has been a week since the new minister clued

in about the leaking oil on the West Coast and said we are on top of this. Fishers are certainly not convinced.

Given government continues to show gross negligence on matters of environmental liability I ask the minister: Does the assessment reveal the leak is natural or not? How can you restore confidence in the residents of Port au Port after two years of complete negligence?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, our biologists and scientists who have been tasked to have a look at this issue are dedicated employees of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. As Environment Minister myself, I am as dedicated as well to finding out exactly what is going on and how to find a solution.

Mr. Speaker, only this morning we had a team meeting to discuss what possibly could be happening. We do not have that evidence yet. If the two scenarios that we are looking at, whether it is leaking wells –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: – or if it natural seepage we are determining exactly the course of action we are going to take if it is one or the other. So when we find out exactly what is going on we will take that responsibility, engage all the stakeholders, Environment Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and ourselves to find that solution.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, government cut Employment Assistance Services agencies back in 2013-2014

to save \$14 million a year under the Labour Market Development Agreement. Hundreds of career counsellors lost their jobs when EAS offices were closed. It turns out they saved the federal government \$11.5 million. The Province had to repay the surplus from closing EAS agencies because they did not have a plan to use it.

I ask the minister: How do you justify having to repay money to the feds because you did not have a plan in place?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, a wonderful program that provides support services to all people looking to enter the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, the question she is talking about was a transition year. All funds are back to full status, the programs continue to roll out, and the people of the Province benefit from them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, last year the Province got \$11.5 million less than expected because they had no plan to reallocate the money from closing down the AES offices. Actually, since the Province signed the Labour Market Development Agreement in 2008, the Province has received \$75 million less than expected.

I ask the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills: How much of that \$75 million was recovered by the feds because you did not have a plan in place to spend it – \$75 million?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the agreement that we signed with the federal government realizes us \$127 million a year – \$127 million a year that goes into apprentices, to support programs, to support people coming new into the workforce.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: It is a wonderful program, Mr. Speaker, and she can say what she wants. It is working extensively well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Last year government underspent the budget for Women's Policy and Violence Prevention by over \$1 million. The year before it was underspent by \$350,000. Last year and this year, the Safe Harbour Outreach Project, or SHOP for short, requested funding for outreach with sex workers but was denied funding both years.

I ask the Premier: Why would you deny funding to SHOP, knowing Women's Policy is underspending its budget considerably?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are a number of reasons why the expenditures at the Women's Policy Office were as they were in the last year. There are a number of those, some of them were efforts by the Women's Policy offices to use technology instead of travelling. They used less time travelling than they did, Mr. Speaker. There were overlapping programs. There were also approval processes as well.

I can tell you, the Women's Policy Office continues to make advancements and work with community partners throughout Newfoundland and Labrador in the best interest of women to make sure that all women's matters and issues are kept top in-line within government and the work that we do as a government as well, Mr. Speaker. We continue to support women throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the Premier that it was a million dollars that the office underspent.

Government's secret sexual exploitation report recommended a street nurse program, like British Columbia's. SHOP had a nurse with experience working in Vancouver's Eastside, but Eastern Health pulled the nurse. Meanwhile, the Province is in the midst of a syphilis outbreak which can increase the spread of HIV. SHOP cannot get an answer from the minister on why they pulled the nurse.

I ask the Premier: Why would you actively take a step backwards in the report's recommendations? This is not just about sex workers, this is about public health.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises a very important issue, and we have received correspondence over the past month or so. My office has been in active discussions with Eastern Health, and Eastern Health is working towards a solution that should be in place very shortly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the first recommendation made in government's secret

sexual exploitation report was that the Cabinet “develop and adopt a Cabinet mandate to address the issues related to sexual exploitation, including prevention, enforcement, interventions, and supports.” That was four years ago and, including the Premier, four ministers ago.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services: Was this recommendation followed, and can he update the people of the Province on what progress this government has made in combating sexual exploitation of our youth?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Actually, I can talk about the Violence Prevention Initiative which was just brought up previously, because that addresses violence, certainly sexual and otherwise. That includes all ages of the population. It is no differently for children and youth. We have partnered with a number of community-based organizations, as well as the RNC and the RCMP, and we have made great strides with that.

The Cybersafe Girl program, the awareness campaign, is just one piece of that. If given more opportunity, I would go into a little bit further detail about some of those programs that we have initiated. As I had said, certainly we are continuing to do even more.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, if the minister is reading from his memo, updated October 23, 2013, where he talked about the 2006 Violence Prevention, I would point out to him that was nine years ago. The secret report was four years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the second recommendation from the four-year-old sexual exploitation report, this government was to “establish a cross-departmental committee... Review policies, programs, services, and legislation to assess the harm or the potential harm they may cause individuals vulnerable to sexual exploitation,” to “Develop an integrated and collaborative cross-departmental approach to identifying and responding to issues related to sexual exploitation,” and to “Provide information to the Cabinet.”

I ask the minister: Have any of the four ministers, including the Premier, acted on this four-year-old recommendation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite brings up time frames and talking about this was decades ago, I just brought up the fact that with regard to the Cybersafe Girl Initiative, that was launched in 2012. I had spoken about with regard to the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, that was launched in 2013. Then you only have to look at as of December 2014, just last year, Mr. Speaker, the work of the unit had resulted in more than forty charges laid with regard to Internet Child Exploitation Newfoundland and Labrador. The work continues.

Not only have we done much, we are certainly continuing to do even more. Again, if given an opportunity, I can stand and talk a little bit more if he wishes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, in 2009 this government announced a new signage plan with great fanfare. Private illegal signs were torn down right across the Province, including the Bug outside of St. John’s. Operators lost money producing signs they could not use. That was six years ago. Today, the industry is still

waiting to see new regulations and policies for the TODS program.

I ask the minister: Is there any plan to complete this project now or has the government decided after six long years that it is time to abandon the idea?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This was a program brought in a number of years ago in consultation with the industry to ensure that we had uniform signage on our highways so that they were more attractive, and that it would open up better tourism potential for people in the Province, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to move that forward.

We are now looking at better ways to impose that, Mr. Speaker. We do have investments in that to ensure that it continues to move forward. We want to work continuously with the industry to ensure that signage is exactly what the industry has outlined as we move forward on this.

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.

This government has blamed hard-working and dedicated public sector health care workers for retention and staffing issues at the St. John's long-term care facility.

I ask the Premier: Why hasn't his government, knowing for seven years that this facility was scheduled to open, worked with Eastern Health to create a pool of permanent, full-time workers to help address the staffing shortages and decrease the reliance on temporary call-ins?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi would suggest, Eastern Health and the Department of Health and Community Services have been working on this challenge of LPN shortages and PCA shortages for quite some time.

We have increased the number of seats in the Province for these programs. We have initiated international recruitment. We have offered a program in Jamaica and we have successfully recruited LPNs from the Jamaican program. As well, we have opened up additional beds. In recent years we have opened many new long-term care beds, and just recently we announced plans to procure 360 new long-term care beds through a public-private partnership as well.

We have a staffing plan. We have had a staffing plan for some time. There are challenges with attrition, there are challenges with the relief staff, and we are working to address those.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

Eastern Health has said that beds are going to be open by the fall. He says he has a plan, so I am asking the minister: Will he table the workforce plan that they have in place in order to have the thirty beds open in the new facility in the fall?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the hon. member that later this month I will be unveiling a workforce plan for the entire

health care sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: It is important work that has been ongoing for some time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you for your protection, Mr. Speaker.

There have been a number of recruitment initiatives ongoing, and there is quite a comprehensive plan. There have been cross-country recruitment drives initiated by Eastern Health, as well there have been partnerships strengthened with the licensing body. We are partnering with the college. We are partnering with the Centre for Nursing Studies. Private colleges, which the member also opposes, have a prominent role to play. There is work going on with the Department of Advanced Education and Skills as well. Many initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, Her Majesty's Penitentiary is operating at full capacity, yet seriously understaffed. Last month alone there were over twenty-five, twenty-four hour shifts, forcing staff to work back-to-back twelve-hour shifts; 115 overtime shifts; 211 double dinners, forcing staff to go without dinner breaks. This is within a month. This is not a safe working environment.

I ask the minister: What is going on?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the member's question. I can say categorically I am not aware of any of those statistics, but I would not be. As I have said many times in this House, the Minister of Justice does not engage in the day-to-day operations of facilities like Her Majesty's Penitentiary. So unless there was something of an urgent nature –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: – that would be brought to my attention, Mr. Speaker, I would not be engaged in those kinds of decisions around who works overtime and the scheduling of shifts and those sorts of things. If the member wants to provide me with some information outside of Question Period, I will certainly gladly look into it for her.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, these are serious unsafe conditions for staff and for inmates. First things to go when a prison is short-staffed are programs, activities and recreation, leading to lockdown for inmates, starting a dangerous downward spiral in tension and potential problems. Summer holiday season is starting.

I ask the minister: What is he going to do to ensure adequate staffing is in place?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, once again the member is on her feet making accusations and putting information out into the public domain that is unsubstantiated. There have been no programs cut – no programs to support inmates at Her Majesty's Penitentiary have been cut. It is totally false to suggest that here on the floor of the House of Assembly.

We will do like we do every single year. The staff at Her Majesty's Penitentiary put a schedule in place to ensure that we have the proper number of workers in place to work with the inmates, and we will do the same as we do every year. If there are extenuating circumstances and challenges that need my attention, I am certain that the good leadership at the penitentiary will bring it to my attention and we will work with them on that.

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 Trinity – Bay de Verde.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the residents of Winterton feel the condition of Main Road, Route 80, located in the Town of Winterton, is deplorable; and

WHEREAS residents of Winterton are frustrated with the condition of the road; and

WHEREAS government has failed to address this problem –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROCKER: WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to make the necessary road repairs to Route 80 through the community of Winterton.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity this afternoon to enter this petition on behalf of the residents of Winterton and surrounding areas. Route 80 through the Town of Winterton, actually, and going pretty much entirely through the Town of Hant's Harbour is actually in a very, very poor condition. It is some of the worst roads you will find in the district. The department has addressed it with some cold patch from time to time, but it is certainly not a solution. The residents from both Hant's Harbour and Winterton and surrounding areas are calling upon the Department of Works, Services and Transportation to look at this issue and to address it sooner rather than later.

These roads are travelled heavily, Mr. Speaker, more so this time of the year with the vibrant fishing industry and processing industry in the area, as well with the ever growing tourism industry in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde.

Mr. Speaker, there are other issues around this section of road, in particular, than others throughout the district. One of the issues with this section of road also is brush cutting. There was some brush cutting completed this past season in the area of New Melbourne and New Chelsea, but there is a section from Hant's Harbour into Winterton that really requires attention when it comes to brush cutting. I urge the minister to take a serious look at this brush cutting come this fall when the department is able to do brush cutting again.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I call upon the minister, I call upon the government to address this issue on Route 80 in Winterton and continuing into Hant's Harbour with this section of road in particular. There are many other sections of road in the district that also require attention. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, that is a topic for another day.

I call upon the minister to have a serious look at this section of Route 80.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, a year ago Trout River was more or less the centre of the universe if you consider a potentially exploding blue whale. It is approximately a year ago that the blue whale issue was ongoing. Another year has passed and there is no movement on cellphones.

Not only no movement on cellphones, no movement, no initiative, no steps forward

whatsoever by this government to engage any private sector carrier to just have a look at the situation, just try to work with them to see what are the possibilities. Mr. Speaker, if we never ever attempt to try to figure out, (a), we know what the problem is, (b), what is the solution, and can we price the solution, we cannot possibly make any progress forward. Even if we were to start today, it would still take considerable time to move this forward.

In the course of the past year-and-a-half, two years since I have been presenting copies of this petition, they just keep coming forward all the time. I had an opportunity to attempt to work with Bell Mobility in Ontario. I was referred there. My office did a search throughout the entire area of St. Barbe district to identify potential towers that they could use to piggyback on top of those existing towers.

Bell Mobility did not know that Bell Aliant had a tower on Cow Head that was quite suitable. They took enough steps forward that they were quite keen to have cellphone service, even to the point of providing me with a map that would show the new coverage – and this new coverage would not actually cover Trout River, but it would cover the northern half of Gros Morne National Park. So the whole area where people take the crews in through the Western Brook Pond, which is actually a fjord, they would have cellphone coverage.

The amount of additional benefit that this would have provided was enormous. For some reason after beginning to move forward, this government put on the brakes and stopped.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the speed limit is 100 kilometres an hour on the Veteran's Memorial Highway; and

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition that I have been brought here quite often. I would like to say, now more so than ever, the importance of it – the stadium is going to be built up on the intersection of that road. I would suggest to the minister to act a little bit quicker on it now because it is a major issue. You will be having much higher traffic in that area now due to the building of the new stadium.

Mr. Speaker, I am just hoping that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. SLADE: The minister is over there saying that he is already on top of it, and I certainly hope he is. We certainly would not want any fatality in that area. It is not that it has not been brought up here.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I am going to leave it that. I am going to sit and take my chair.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS most communities in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair do not have cellphone coverage; and

WHEREAS residents of coastal Labrador require cellphone coverage to ensure their safety and communications abilities; and

WHEREAS the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway has increased their dependency on mobile communications;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies to provide cellphone coverage along the Trans-Labrador Highway and to communities in coastal Labrador.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, when you get off the ferry or you arrive at the airport in Quebec and you head down through the Labrador Straits, there are a couple of communities that have cell coverage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: When you leave Red Bay you have about a 600-kilometre stretch on some of the most desolate road and area, I would say, in Newfoundland and Labrador, certainly lots of inclement weather there, Mr. Speaker. Yet for that 600 or 700-kilometre stretch there is not one place where you can use your cellphone – not one.

I know cell coverage is very, very costly, Mr. Speaker. We are not talking about small communities. We are talking about a main artery that goes right through Labrador. Tourists are going down. We have recently opened up.

Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering what is the plan. An ATIPP review recently revealed that

for the last year there was absolutely no dialogue between the Province and the feds on cell coverage for this Province.

Not everywhere can we have cellphone coverage, we recognize that. Surely, Mr. Speaker, there is a plan as we progress forward, it is 2015, that certain areas, tourists and residents who live in the area will be able to go in and will be able to use cellphone services, especially for emergencies.

I am happy to enter this petition on behalf of the residents of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. I will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: It now being 3:00 p.m., Private Members' Day, I go to the Member for Labrador West to begin debate on his private member's motion.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to stand today and introduce this private member's resolution. I would just like to read the resolution into the minutes for Hansard. :

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's decision to invest in the Province's thriving tourism industry through initiatives that include providing for a \$2 million increase in the tourism marketing budget, bringing the total budget for tourism marketing to \$13 million.

Mr. Speaker, when I read this private member's resolution, as I was preparing to speak to it, I thought back; my background in tourism goes back to the early 1980s. In 1985 in my district

in Labrador West, I got very involved with the local – at that time – Regional Tourism Association. In 1986 I took over as President of that association and then moved up through different organizations involved in tourism within the Province.

I think one of the most significant organizations that I was involved with and started out as just a member and then became a director, went up through the executive level, so I spent about twelve to fourteen years with Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador. I have nothing but good to say about that organization. They are a strong organization that represents the majority of tourism operators within our Province.

I remember back – actually it was quite a while ago because Julie Bettney was the Minister of Tourism at the time. I remember sitting the board room with Minister Bettney at that time and we were dealing with a marketing budget of \$2 million at the time. It was a struggle, certainly for Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, which was the larger part of the marketing agency for tourism within the Province. For the government to just have \$2 million to put into marketing, it was very difficult to do justice.

Since 2004, we now see that the marketing dollars are at \$13 million. I was involved in many of the trade shows going to Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Halifax, certainly here in the capital city of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and being on the floor selling tourism as a market, as a destination.

When you had limited dollars to work with, it was very difficult. Back in mid-1980s or early 1990s most of it was done through paper. You had face-to-face meetings. You carried many, many brochures with you. The travel brochure for the Province itself was one of the main components of how people planned their trips.

Since then, certainly our marketing campaign, through this government, with the advertising that we are doing we are world renowned right now. We have won many, many awards through our marketing campaign.

One of the comments that I hear, I still travel a fair bit, and you are constantly – I guess once you get tourism in your blood it is always there. People are always approaching you when they – our accents are fairly distinctive, and when people find out you are from Newfoundland and Labrador they want to talk to you about the Province. Quite often they talk about the ads that we use worldwide now.

I was out last night, actually. Myself and one of my colleagues went to a restaurant downtown last night. When we were walking to the restaurant, we saw a group of tourists. There were about maybe sixty or seventy of them. They were all staying in a couple of the hotels in the downtown area. You could see these people were going out. They are staying in a hotel. They are eating in the restaurants. They are using the local facilities here. So, everybody is benefitting.

If you look at the numbers – I am not going to get into heavy stats, but when you look at different numbers with the air travel, with road travel, the tourists who are coming in, that is all new dollars that are coming into the Province.

Through our advertising, one of the main things – and quite often comments I hear from tourists is that when they watch those ads, when they see it on social media, it makes them want to come to this destination. So those ads are working, but it costs money. I was very pleased when the government decided in this year's Budget to make that investment of an extra \$2 million into the marketing for tourism for the Province. I think it is money well spent.

Another thing we need to realize is that for every dollar a non-resident tourist spends within our Province, every dollar is new money coming into the Province. Outside of our residential tourism, which is money that moves from one part of the Province to the other, we have the non-resident revenue that is coming in. That brings big dividends. It creates jobs. It diversifies the economy.

Tourism is growing in our Province. When we see where tourism is today, it is over a billion-dollar industry. I think that is very important, but in order to sustain that industry, in order to market that industry, you have to invest money

into it. I think our government realizes that. As I said, since we started in this Administration, we have gone from a \$2 million marketing budget, now to a \$13 million budget. That is huge numbers. Everything has increased in cost, and I have seen it where it has been very difficult for the marketers to get.

I have gone to some of these trade shows, I will mention one, the Toronto Travel and Leisure Show. Normally, when we went to the Toronto Travel and Leisure Show, there was a contingent that went from the Province representing the Province as a whole. When we would get there, Newfoundland and Labrador would very strategically be set up right at the entrance of the trade show. So that when people came in, it was the loud, boisterous music, it was the friendly faces on the people.

We went there as a contingent, normally between twenty and twenty-four people, and you would be marketing different parts of the Province. What was important is that we were marketing it as one Province. I was not there just selling Labrador West. Someone was not there just selling Gander. Someone was not there just selling the West Coast or Gros Morne. We were selling it as a destination.

One of the big things we always try to do – and you hear people talk about it. I heard the Premier comment on it when he spoke the other night. People come to the Province and they often think, well, I am going to take a couple of days, or they drive to Nova Scotia, get up to Cape Breton, I must pop over to Newfoundland and spend a couple of days there. When they get here they realize, I cannot see all of that in a couple of days. That is what our marketing campaigns clarify.

Our marketing campaign lets them know that Newfoundland and Labrador is a destination, but then it shows very epic reasons why you would come and spend two or three weeks in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the positive sides that we are seeing now from the tourists who are coming to Newfoundland and Labrador. We are starting to see that they come, and they are not coming by chance. No tourist comes to Newfoundland and Labrador because they made a wrong left-hand or right-hand turn in Nova Scotia, or because they made a wrong

turn in Baie-Comeau and they ended up in Labrador City. That does not happen.

So, when they are coming to Newfoundland and Labrador, when the tourists are coming here, they are coming by choice. Newfoundland and Labrador is not just selling – when you look at our ads, we are not just selling a particular season. Newfoundland and Labrador right now is becoming a year-round destination.

I know in my district, we have very long winters. Through events such as Cain's Quest – which the Province certainly invests in and is advertised throughout the world – we get world-renowned, serious snowmobilers, endurance sledders who come from all over the world. We have had them from Norway. We have had them from Britain. We have had them from Greenland, down throughout the United States, who come to participate in that.

I have seen tourists come in the middle of the winter, in February, and stay until March, to the latter part of March, be there for six and eight weeks at a time. When they are coming, they are spending money in the hotels. They are eating in the restaurants. They are not bringing mechanics with them. When they have their sleds with them, they go out in the winter and they ride for probably 200, 300 kilometres a day. When they come back, they want to have a mechanic from a local service station come pick up their machine and service their machine overnight so that when they get up the next morning, all they have to do is get on their machine and start riding again.

That is all new money. That is non-residential money. I know when I was in the industry myself, I had a very difficult time – and I chuckle at it now, because some of those people still work in the department and we joke about it at times. I had a very difficult time convincing the Premier of the Day, and that was Danny Williams, convincing him and people within the department that Quebec, for example, was a market that we should be tapping in to.

I had a very difficult time getting funding to go to Bienvenue Quebec, because they felt it was not a market that was interested in Newfoundland and Labrador, but because of the diversification we have used in our marketing

campaigns, they now realize that Quebec is a neighbour to Labrador, and they are spending an awful lot of money, the people from Quebec. For example, in a twelve-hour drive you can leave Quebec City, one of the major hubs on the East Coast of Quebec, and you can be in the heart of Labrador. You can be in Labrador West in that twelve-hour drive.

When they are coming, they are coming with their sleds in the wintertime. In the summertime, they are coming for hunting and fishing. Opening the Trans-Labrador Highway is another huge investment, a huge investment that this government has made that relates to tourism.

Now we can market Labrador. I know one of the marketing campaigns for Labrador was the Last Frontier in North America. I have had people come up to me afterwards and say the advertising ads are what attracted them to it. They are coming into Labrador now and they are saying do not change it. Make sure you do not change it because you are coming in and you are seeing the natural beauties. That is something that this government is very, very careful of. When we are building an infrastructure to bring those people in, we are being very careful that we also sustain and maintain what we have, what it is we are advertising.

I am really, really pleased that this \$2 million has gone into the marketing campaign again this year. I know it will be money well spent. As I said, I think it is very important that it is a collective arrangement that the government is working with the industry.

We work very closely with organizations such as Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador. We work with organizations such as Destination Labrador, Destination St. John's, and Destination Gander. Those organizations work with the government, using that \$13 million, we all work together to make sure that we are out marketing our Province as a unique destination.

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that the new dollars that come in – for every non-resident tourist they are bringing new money into the Province. We also have a very large residential tourism campaign that we use. That is money that moves from one part of the

Province to the other. It is not new money, but getting that non-resident – and I remember about five years ago we focused, they take the money, the marketing dollars, and they decide where they are going to spend it. About five, six years ago they decided that they needed to get into Central Canada. We noticed our numbers were low in Central Canada.

We took a certain amount of that money. At that time I think \$11 million was in the marketing budget. They took a good chunk of it and they focused on Manitoba and Alberta. It was absolutely amazing how the numbers moved in those two provinces from Manitoba and Alberta of residents from that particular part of the country who were coming into Newfoundland and Labrador. They were coming here again bringing in new money, spending new dollars.

I am running out of time, but I think one of the most important things we need to realize with the tourism industry and with the marketing that we do is that it is the small businesses that really benefit. It is the corner stores, it is the restaurants, the B & Bs, the hotels throughout the whole Province, they are the ones that are benefitting through these non-resident tourism dollars that are coming in here that is going into help all of those small businesses. It is diversifying an economy that is growing.

We have really focused on building our shoulder seasons and that is working. The golf clubs working with the hoteliers so that in the off-seasons, in the shoulder season, you can get a good package. These are the things that are working.

I am really pleased that the \$2 million is being put in. I am looking forward to hearing the debate on this today.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): The hon. the Member for Humber East.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FLYNN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I did not rise to correct the member from Labrador on the Budget where it was when he came into office, but it was at \$6 million, not \$1 million.

To stand up today and not be happy that the Budget increased by \$2 million would be unfortunate, even for us as Opposition who are here to criticize the things that are not done. Mr. Speaker, the reality is we are only now at the level that we were three years ago. That is unfortunate that the government is trying to pat itself on the back for the great job we are doing in tourism.

What I would really like to do here today is point out some of the things that has not been done, some that the industry is putting forward and if time permits, I will certainly go down through some of that. There is no question that we have some of the greatest ads produced anywhere in the world. We have some of the greatest product that is produced anywhere in the world and we give the people in the Department of Tourism credit for doing that.

I want to say that right up front, right off the top; however, the industry lost two years of growth and investment in this area when the Budget was cut in 2013. To suggest it is a big increase, it is a miracle that we are working with this year that we got \$2 million, is absolutely ludicrous because we are still only at 2013 levels. Everyone knows that a dollar in 2013 is going to buy more than it will in 2015-2016.

What I find so ironic is that here is an industry that actually brings money to the provincial economy, because if you look at the ratio that the government is using, for every dollar that we spend on tourism ads, we get \$10 back in taxes. I have been in business for a long time and I can tell you, if I could spend \$1 and get \$10 back, I would consider that great return on my investment. There is no question that the investment we make in tourism pays the provincial revenues back tenfold.

The workforce in this Province, directly from the tourism industry, is 8 per cent, and that is significant. That is, I think, the third highest level of workers in the Province working in the tourism field. This two-year reduction in the marketing expenditure, in my view, has hurt the

industry and, indeed, it has hurt the Province. Truly, it is total incompetence on behalf of this government in its decision to cut the tourism budget by \$2 million back in 2013.

The Tourism Vision 2020 called for doubling the value of tourism in this Province by 2020. The current trend indicates we are in real problems with meeting that goal. In 2014, non-resident visitors were roughly 508,000. While airline travel was up by 5.8 per cent in 2014, automobile travel and cruise visitor travel were down significantly.

As a matter of fact, automobile dropped 7.3 per cent in one year and if you spread that over ten years, the actual reality is that the traffic has been down significantly by 35 per cent over ten years. What is really striking about this is that most of these would have come in on Marine Atlantic – and you know the best that this government could produce to me when I asked for it, is that they have sent two letters to Marine Atlantic voicing their concern about the rate increases on Marine Atlantic. I think that is unfortunate. This has a big impact on rural Newfoundland and Labrador in developing that industry there.

Cruise ships were down significantly by 13 per cent up to last year. Air and automobile combined is down another 2.2 per cent over 2014 so far this year. It is important that we keep a perspective on this because our tourism to the rural parts of this Province depends significantly on the use of Marine Atlantic.

Non-resident automobile travel was down 7.6 per cent alone last year on Marine Atlantic. All of these numbers are important because we are talking initiatives that this government has undertaken; but, certainly, we have failed to recognize, this government has failed to recognize the importance of Marine Atlantic transportation to this Province.

I think it is revealing that in a news release that was issued on December 24, 2014 when actually no one was paying attention that day, on Christmas Eve after all, and the minister put out a press release saying: “We are clearly in the best position we have ever been in as an industry. Our brand is stronger than ever and our Find Yourself campaign has become one of

the most recognizable advertising campaigns in the country. Tourism spending reached \$1 billion for the first time in 2011, putting us well ahead of schedule for achieving our Vision 2020 goal.”

This is just not so, and I challenge the government on this information. We have to question some of the statistics. I, too, was a part of the tourism industry for forty years, Mr. Speaker, and we are using statistics that are five years old. It is one thing to say that we had 5,800 non-resident visitors last year, but we really, really do not know who they are. We do not know if they are really real tourists or not.

They could be people who have lost their jobs in this Province and are going to Alberta to go to work. It could be business travellers coming to St. John’s. So truthfully, because we have not done an air-auto exit in five years, we really do not know because traffic patterns have changed. We also have not done an annual update on these numbers. So for me to stand and say oh, the great work that this government is doing, there is certainly more that could be done. Because we are really not given, I believe, the exact picture of what this tourism industry is in the Province.

Our big problem is that we are advertising our Province and making our citizens very proud – and that is great; I hear that right throughout the Province of the great ads that we have. We hope that tourists who are coming here, the experiences that they get will meet the expectations that they have once seeing these ads.

There are problems being created by the approach this government is using. I would like to point out one, the Minister of Environment, back some time ago: The adventure tourism in hunting and fishing are primary areas for our tourism marketing. Yet we just hit outfitters, the people who deliver the experience in this Province to the tourist, we just hit them with a 50 per cent increase. It is absolutely ridiculous, shameful.

AN HON. MEMBER: With no warning.

MR. FLYNN: No warning, no consultation. I challenge the minister to produce on the table

the paper where he discussed that with the department of tourism. Not only did they introduce it, they made it retroactive. So there was no consultation with the outfitters. There was nothing done before they moved on this plan. So local outfitters now who were going to reinvest into better beds, or new pillows, or whatever the case might be in their lodge, have had to pull back on that. As a result, our tourism industry will no doubt suffer as a result of it.

While it is nice to see that money being spent in advertising, there is more to building an industry than painting a picture. That is the reality of what this government is trying to do.

We have a number of our own provincial sites that the government is responsible for. If I was allowed to bring props into the House today I would put a prop up showing the Bonavista Lighthouse where there is absolutely no paint left on that building and it has been like it for some time. Although there was money, I understand, in the Budget this year to do that work. It still does not rule out the fact that it has been neglected for far too long.

MR. WISEMAN: Ready in September.

MR. FLYNN: The Minister of Finance said it will be ready in September. Well that shows really the good planning of the government. Once the tourists leave, we will paint the building.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. FLYNN: Well, the horse is out of the barn at that point, I say to the Speaker.

The other big issue – not that I have, this is an issue that the operators have. The government is violating their own regulations. Inspections are required and they are being ignored. Unlicensed properties are operating without proper oversight.

Listen, if it was just because of the credit card, I could look over that. The Premier stood in the House when I asked a question last week and he talked about if there is an issue with a property, give the office a call. Well, I say to the Premier in this speech today, there are issues. His own inspection agency has identified over 150

properties across this Province that are operating illegally and the department of tourism is turning a blind eye to it.

It has been in the papers by the industry association, yet we are turning a blind eye to it. Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, do you know what the department actually does to some of the outfitters out there? It is too far to go in and see if you have a fire extinguisher or that we have a smoke detector. They are actually sending out licensing without any inspections at all. We had a case in Marystown where three people nearly burnt to death because the property was not inspected, and that is unfortunate that these things are happening in our tourism industry today.

Today, I asked about the tourism directional signage and still, Mr. Speaker, since 2009 when the government brought this in, they have left it and it is an issue for the industry.

Let's talk about the staff – the Member for Labrador West got up and talked about the great effort in Labrador. Well, guess what? What happened to the tourism officers that were in Labrador? Completely pulled out, no one there to help with the development of the tourism industry. It is a frontier and we should be respecting that it is a frontier and we do need support for its development and growth. Unfortunately again, we have lost this opportunity.

I could give you more statistics where the numbers are showing that in 2014-2015 traffic is already coming down to this Province. We recognize that there will be a need to really take a look at Marine Atlantic, but let's talk about our own ferry system. I know my colleague is going to speak on this motion as well, but let's look at the ferry systems that they have introduced for Labrador. Oh, they did not introduce one; that was something they forgot.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, they did.

MR. FLYNN: What? They did? They sent out an RFP.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. FLYNN: What happened? It got shucked under the table.

AN HON. MEMBER: They are going to do another one.

MR. FLYNN: They are going to do another one just to waste more time. I wish that my colleague for Labrador West would have remained Minister of Transportation because at least he would have understood the challenges that we have there.

Let's stop making assumptions on the tourism that we are proudly saying we have here. It is a great industry, but we really have to start planning for the long term, not for tomorrow and then we plan tomorrow for the next day. This has to be long planning. We have to set a good foundation and if we are committed to the industry as this government says they are, let's make some sound plans for the future.

In conclusion, because I have fifty seconds left, the Vision 2020 plan fell short in meeting their strategic goals. There were seven of them: private partner leadership, short; Sustainable Transport Network, short; Marketing Intelligence & Research Strategy, short; Product Development, short; Tourism Technology, short; brand marketing, short; workforce development, short. They have not met one, not one, of the objectives that was set out in the 2020 plan.

So how can we stand up today and pat ourselves on the back saying, what a great industry we have, this government has built it, while it is the hardworking people out in the community that has built this industry on their tax dollars, and let's see that it is spent well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It certainly is a delight to stand up today representing the great and cultural District of

Port au Port to speak to this private member's resolution.

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's decision to invest in the Province's thriving tourism industry through initiatives that include providing for a \$2 million increase in the tourism marketing budget, bringing the total budget for tourism marketing to \$13 million.

That private member's resolution was brought forth by my colleague, the hon. Member for Labrador West.

I was listening attentively to the Member for Humber East moments ago who spoke about this motion, and it is so negative about the impacts of tourism on our economy.

AN HON. MEMBER: He was an operator, that is why.

MR. CORNECT: Mr. Speaker, he was an operator. So obviously, and from my account of what people tell me, he was pretty successful. If he was a successful operator in tourism, tourism must be working here in the Province to be successful. I say to the member, you cannot have it both ways.

I am also thrilled this afternoon to be seconding the motion. As you know, the tourism sector falls within the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. This department is the lead for the economic tourism, culture and innovative agenda of our government.

It is also responsible for strengthening and diversifying the economy on a provincial and regional basis, supporting economic growth and employment in the tourism industry, cultivating contemporary arts, and preserving the Province's cultural heritage. The department also establishes and operates historic sites, visitor information centres, and the Arts and Culture Centres.

In the tourism, culture, and heritage sectors, Mr. Speaker, *Budget 2015: Balancing Choices for a Promising Future* has allocated a total of \$52,216,300, according to the Estimates and the

Budget we just passed in the House of Assembly just a couple of days ago.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about tourism marketing, the allocated money goes to the development and implementation of a fully integrated marketing program targeted to potential non-resident and resident visitors and designed to market the Province as a unique tourism destination for the purpose of economic growth. Funding for the culture and heritage sectors goes to support the preservation, management, and development of our arts and heritage, to the operation of historic sites, archeological programs, and programming support to the arts and heritage sectors.

As I previously mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we support the Arts and Culture Centres in our Province, and I am very proud to say there is one in Stephenville, in my region. It is a beautiful facility. The exterior of the building was completely renovated just a couple of years ago. Also, we saw some improvements and upgrades to the main stage of the Arts and Culture Centre, the main theatre.

Also, Mr. Speaker, a few years ago a second stage was added to the facility. There was some space available within the building; that was converted to a second stage to house smaller activities and shows. I say this because the Arts and Culture Centre in Stephenville is very actively involved in the promotion of the arts, the culture, and the music of our Province and region. It promotes the visiting artists, provincial artists, local artists, and emerging stars.

Mr. Speaker, one of the fascinating features of the Arts and Culture Centre in Stephenville is that it is home to the Stephenville Theatre Festival. The Stephenville Theatre Festival is celebrating its thirty-seventh season this year. It has dazzled audiences of all ages from every corner of the world for many, many years. We are also very proud as a government to be a funding partner of the Stephenville Theatre Festival through the Cultural, Economic Development Program. The partnership with the Stephenville Theatre Festival helps with the marketing initiatives to bring tourists here to our Province and in our communities.

Also, Mr. Speaker, over the next couple of years the Bay St. George Region is gearing up to recognize the fiftieth anniversary of the closure of the Ernest Harmon Air Force Base in Stephenville. The Stephenville Cultural Destination Committee has been set up in the area with representatives from the community and various sectors. Mr. Speaker, it is planning to mark this anniversary with a lot of events.

As well, Mr. Speaker, they will also mark the 100 anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel next year. In fact, I am very honoured and privileged to say that my great uncle Eugene Cornect, Regimental 429, fought the battle, though wounded survived.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that our government has partnered with the Stephenville Cultural Destination Committee to a tune of over \$63,000 so that those events and those activities planned can take place.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about tourism and driving forces behind the development and growth of tourism within the Province, in my district as well, there is a Gravels Development Group which operates the Our Lady of Mercy Complex and walking trail. The complex is home to probably the largest wooden structure in Newfoundland and Labrador, Our Lady of Mercy Heritage Church. It is over 100 years old. It proudly displays the creative and innovative local craftsmanship, the marble Stations of the Cross, the original statutes and altars. It is absolutely outstanding. Even today, Mr. Speaker, its colourful, stained glass which makes the church look magnificent.

Mr. Speaker, the museum, in the former parish rectory, is a museum of literature and artifacts from right across the Port au Port Peninsula. It tells the story of the people and the communities that persevered and survived, and continue to share their experiences and make us strong, proud, and vibrant.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in my district we have the French, the Acadian, and the Mi'kmaq cultures that has made our region one of distinct notoriety. Me, like so many others in our

Province, are so very proud of our culture, our language, and our heritage.

We have opened our homes and our hearts to visitors from all over who come to learn and to experience our resilience and our survival. We do it through song and dance, storytelling and theatre, education and learning, festivals and events, through celebration and commemoration. Knowing who we are and where we come from, defines our story that the world awaits to hear.

In my district, Mr. Speaker, there are many festivals and events that are held annually that attract many visitors.

[French spoken]

Again, Mr. Speaker, these events, activities, and festivals draw residents, non-residents, and former residents to our Province to explore and celebrate what we have to offer. This means that there will be more tourists using our accommodations, visiting our museums, and dining out. It means that more people will spend their money here, bringing more money to our Province, and growing our economy.

Mr. Speaker, in just a few short years, tourism in this Province has grown to be a billion-dollar industry. That is right, a billion with a B. This motion this afternoon is about investing good money into sectors that will grow the economy by creating jobs, short and long term, creating opportunities for existing business to grow and to expand, to attracting new businesses, and to showcasing our people, our culture, our heritage, and our hospitality.

We provide funding, Mr. Speaker, to the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council which supports the artistic development of visual and performing artists. Our music, our arts, and our celebrations have been a cornerstone to preserving and promoting who we are and where we come from.

When we talk about tourism, Mr. Speaker, and ask how we can attract tourists, there are a number of things we can do to improve our destination as a place to visit as well. We as a government have been doing this through investments to community infrastructure such as

water, sewer, recreation, fire and emergency services, and health and community services.

We allocated monies, Mr. Speaker, in our Budget to support Visitor Information Centres to better inform tourists of what our Province and regions have to offer. Some other initiatives our government has undertaken over the last number of years to improve services for tourists who visit our Province is our investments in the Rural Broadband Initiative or telecommunications.

Since 2003, Mr. Speaker, our government has invested over \$34 million and leveraged more than \$121 million from other sources to improve broadband access in Newfoundland and Labrador, for a total investment of over \$155 million. This investment will bring the total population connected to 98 per cent, mostly in rural parts of the Province so that it can be a benefit to the residents of the Province and also a benefit to those who are visiting our Province as well.

In Transportation and Works, strategic investments are being made on roads and highways across Newfoundland and Labrador. Our government has invested \$1.7 billion since 2004 in marine vessels, the provincial roads program, the Trans-Labrador Highway, on ferry terminals and wharves, and on airport and airstrip infrastructure. Such investment, Mr. Speaker, not only ensures safe and reliable transportation networks for families in communities across the Province, but also for the many tourists who visit every year.

The new 911 system will ensure individuals who are experiencing an emergency will now be able to access emergency services by simply calling or dialing 911, another benefit for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador as well as tourists and businesses.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, from 2012 to 2014 the provincial tourism website registered more than 963,000 referrals to tourism operators from business listings and more 7,500 referrals from package listings. From January to March of this year visits to www.newfoundlandlabrador.com reached more than 508,000 sessions – an increase of 13.3 per cent compared to the same period in 2014. These indicators mean one thing and one thing important: The world is taking

notice of all that Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer and tourists are not only visiting our web sites, but they are visiting Newfoundland and Labrador. They are coming here to our Province; they are coming to our communities.

Our 2014 year-end reports tell us that the number of non-resident, automobile, air, and cruise visitors travelling to the Province reached an estimated 507,901 visitors, an increase of 2 per cent over 2013. The number of non-resident air visitors travelling the Province reached an estimated 388,436, an increase of 5.8 per cent since 2013.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot do it alone. It takes partnerships, it takes investments, it takes participation, and it takes commitment and determination to do it and to get it done.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CORNETT: Working together, we will continue –

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

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, working together, we will continue to make Newfoundland and Labrador a place to visit and a place to explore.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had the order a little bit mixed up.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to get the opportunity to stand and speak to this resolution today. I know the Member for Labrador West and I have had our moments in the House, but there is certainly something we can agree on here today and that is the importance of our tourist industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I sat and watched he and my colleague here debate I guess the high points, the dollars that have been spent, the dollars that have not been spent. They are working at a different level in

tourism than I am. They have been at this most of their lives; they have been in business in tourism.

I want to take the opportunity today – when I was a child, my family vacationed at home. We camped. We travelled Newfoundland. We got to know the Island. My son was here today; we did the same thing when he was growing up. I have coached throughout the Province so I have taken students throughout our Island and always taken the opportunity to talk to them about the significance of where they are, what they are seeing, what towns they are in, and so on. As a teacher I taught Newfoundland history. I taught Newfoundland geography. So when I retired, I found myself contracted by a local tour company to do tours throughout this Province.

Mr. Speaker, that is where I want to speak from today. While this motion talks about the marketing and more money into the marketing of the tourist product, I want to talk a little bit about my experiences on the ground after those tourists arrive, and talk about maybe some of the details that we do not see, some of the details that need to be cleared up to make the visits by people to our Province a little bit smoother in some ways.

I am not here to lay blame. I know some of the issues that I will talk about today are federal issues. Most of them are provincial issues. Some of them are issues that private enterprise can solve. Maybe some of them are issues that organizations such as the ones that my colleagues have been Chairs of may be able to solve as well.

I want to take you on the tour that I do. We will stop at some of the places – and some of the very, very positive things that I see, some of the things that I see as details that we have missed here in the Province that we need to fix to make that experience a little bit better.

My tour starts in Deer Lake. I meet my tourists as they come in. They fly into Deer Lake and then transfer to Corner Brook. We stay at the Glynmill Inn in Corner Brook. I fly into Deer Lake on a Wednesday, they fly in that same day, and we do the transfers.

Mr. Speaker, they are all excited. They have seen the ads that we have talked about. They have read the literature. They are ready to go. It is a diverse group. Many of them are world travellers. Many of them have vacationed in Europe, many have vacationed in Alaska, many of them have vacationed in Asia, and now they are ready to do Newfoundland. Some of them have been saving up for a long time and now find themselves doing this as either a retirement gift or an anniversary gift. So we have a broad range of a socio-economic group, as well as a broad range of experiences in terms of having travelled in the past.

Mr. Speaker, we all gather at the Glynmill Inn. The first challenge that I have is when I get a note or an email saying I have four people who could not get in this afternoon and they will not be able to get a flight in until midnight tonight. So my job at that point in time is to rearrange the schedule, find taxi transportation to get them back into Corner Brook, meet them at maybe 1:30 a.m. or 2:00 a.m., and then tell them that our alarm will go off at 6:00 tomorrow morning so that we can get up on the road. Trying to get that last group in, that is the first challenge. I am not sure whose issue it is, but it is an issue that invariably happens.

The first day we start at Cook Lookout in Corner Brook. From there we are headed for Plum Point and take a side trip through Gros Morne. The last trip I made, when we went through Gros Morne it was all fog so we saw nothing. On the way back a couple of days later, the comment was well, we kept it in a shroud on the way up so that you could see it on the way back.

The first stop is Plum Point. We are spending the first night in Plum Point. I go back to a petition that my colleague for Trinity – Bay de Verde has been bringing forward about a burned-out building opposite Northern Bay Sands. For three years there has been a burned-out building opposite the hotel where we stayed in Plum Point. Beautiful scenery on the back, looking out over the bay and so on, the sunset on the West Coast, but on the front of the building we have a burned-out building.

The next day, Mr. Speaker, we are heading for St. Anthony. We are going to go to St. Anthony and come back the same day. The biggest issue

we have on that run – and St. Anthony is a great show with L'Anse aux Meadows and so on, but the issue is road conditions. I have a professional driver with me, and he spends most of his day driving down the middle of the road. Shoulders are broken, the road is potholed. I have thirty-five tourists and they are wondering why we are going down the middle of the road.

That is the norm in many parts of this Province. That is a norm that if we are going to have people coming, paying big amounts of money, taking expensive equipment over those roads, those roads need to be in better repair.

Mr. Speaker, obviously we are not going to finish my tour today, but there are a couple of points I want to make. One of the issues is crossing on the ferry – my colleague mentioned. We spend the day over in Labrador. As you can imagine, most of my group is over seventy-five, between seventy-five and ninety. So we have to get across on the ferry. It means a 5:00 a.m. rise for these people to get them on the ferry and get them across. We spent the day and go down as far as Red Bay and stop at L'Anse-Amour. I keep saying to my colleague from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, what a great spot it is and probably the most missed tourist spot in the Province. It is beautiful, but it has a dirt road.

Let's go back to the ferry. On the way back, we spend the night in L'Anse au Clair. The next morning we are up at 5:00 a.m. to get on the ferry. Mr. Speaker, I have just taken thirty-five senior citizens out of their beds at 5:00 a.m. two mornings in a row.

AN HON. MEMBER: Why?

MR. HILLIER: The reason being is they will not give me a ticket to get on the ferry unless I arrive, stop the bus, leave these people on the bus, go in, and go through the process of purchasing a ticket. I have offered to go down the night before and pick up the ticket so I could leave my people in bed. No, not possible. I cannot do it online. The technology is not there to do it online, Mr. Speaker. Those are the kinds of details that seem so easy to fix.

Mr. Speaker, we come back and we stop at the Arches Provincial Park, a beautiful spot in this Province. It is clean. It is geologically

significant. The issue that is at the Arches is one I face for the whole of my trip. I have thirty-five seniors and at the Arches you have one pit toilet. Remember I have senior citizens and we do not have bathroom facilities.

That is a reality when you are travelling with seniors. People ask me how I decide where to stop with seniors. One of the biggest issues in stopping with seniors, and I guess with anybody, is that you have to have bathroom facilities. At the Arches you do not have that situation, Mr. Speaker.

We spend some time in Gros Morne, and then back across the Province. We run down to Twillingate. We go down to Bonavista. Down in Bonavista we talked about the lighthouse earlier. We did not get to Elliston because the road was too bad. Unfortunately, we have the cellar capital of the world and we have the new monument down there, but we chose not to go. We go to the Dungeon there.

We have lunch in Bonavista and invariably people would look out the window of the restaurant and say: What is that big garage there? The big garage is where they store the replica of the *Matthew* that we have not seen in many summers. It is there, but it is not being used. Those are simple details, Mr. Speaker, that can be solved.

Mr. Speaker, as we come back across the isthmus, when I get close to Heart's Content I start talking about communications –

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, Hear – 150 years.

MR. HILLIER: One hundred and fifty years. We talk about the laying of the Transatlantic cable.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other issues I have, my job as a tour guide, as we travel I have to call ahead to make sure that my rooms are set for tomorrow night. I have to give my lunch orders for tomorrow, and if I am moving, pulling into a restaurant for lunch, I have to let them know we are half-hour out or an hour out and we will be there at such-and-such a time.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is not going to happen in Trinity – Bay de Verde.

MR. HILLIER: It is not going to happen in Trinity – Bay de Verde. I could have talked about this running up through Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, but I did not. You are totally out in the wilderness, and you have to have your bus – if you can find three bars, you say to the driver stop, I have to make my calls here. It is an issue right across the Province.

Mr. Speaker, not only for me, it is for people who have travelled to this Province and want to be able to contact relatives back home at any given time. They cannot in many, many locations throughout this Province, as various of my colleagues have mentioned in their debate and in their petitions and so on. It is not something they have just made up to bring forward. It is a real issue, as we move right across the Province.

Mr. Speaker, as we come on to the Avalon, our next stop is Witless Bay. We are going to go whale watching with O'Brien's Tours, and out to the bird islands. Because one of the things these people want to see, they want to see the puffins. How many of you have gone across Witless Bay Line on a bus? Again, Mr. Speaker, we are running down the middle of the highway with the yellow line going straight through under the bus.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, we will not finish my tour today. It is a fabulous tour. People see a fabulous product, as has been discussed here today, but there are details we need to deal with.

I heard one of my colleagues as a tour guide say: Rex, what do they see that we do not see? Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to see our Province through somebody else's eyes. They see things in our communities, they see the positive things in our communities that we do not see. Not only that, they also see those details that sometimes we ignore. Mr. Speaker, it has been an honour for me to be able to take people throughout our Province to show them these pieces.

I will give you an example of the impact of tourism on Newfoundland and Labrador. We go down to a little place just outside Twillingate, called Little Harbour. I am not sure how many people are there, but we have a tour bus that goes in there every Thursday morning. Thirty-

five wealthy tourists get off that bus and go into the gift shop in Little Harbour every Thursday morning. Just imagine the impact on a place such as Little Harbour with, I do not know, fifty people. Seventeen times a summer, thirty-five people get off a bus and spend their money in Little Harbour.

Unfortunately, the people of Little Harbour are aging. Mr. Speaker, that is another issue these people say to me: Rex, where are the children in these communities? It is unfortunate to be able to say to them, these communities are dying and the children are elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to speak on this topic.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted and honoured to be able to speak in this House of Assembly today to represent the great people of the District of Bonavista South, and in particular the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, I have prepared in my mind some notes in relation to how I was going to respond to this very important private member's resolution that is related to tourism.

While I listened very carefully to the Opposition members who spoke – the Member for Humber East and the Member for Conception Bay South, I believe – they highlighted some of what they mentioned were concerns in the District of Bonavista South. I would like to take my time to rebut.

I do not like to speak negatively. Usually when I speak, I am speaking positively about my district, but I have no other choice but to rebut some of the comments that were made in the House of Assembly today by members opposite. In particular, one, the Bonavista Lighthouse, that is actually positioned on Cape Bonavista, Newfoundland and Labrador. Actually, the

Province of Newfoundland, and in particular this government, invested substantially in relation to doing repairs to the Bonavista Lighthouse.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Anyone can visit that site and see clearly. In actual fact, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of buildings on that site, and we as a Province invest on a continued basis \$1.2 million on a multi-year plan that takes care of provincial historic sites.

I am going to give the facts here today, Mr. Speaker, on what is happening in the District of Bonavista South in particular. When you look at buildings that are adjacent to the Bonavista Lighthouse, yes, there is a need to have some enhancement, some upgrades done there. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? This year, this government invested \$75,000 to actually improve the enhancement of the buildings adjacent to the Bonavista Lighthouse.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. LITTLE: It is \$75,000, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: There was an additional \$80,000 spent at the Mockbeggar Plantation property, the Bradley property as it is known locally, Mr. Speaker, and it was invested by this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: We are, as a government, committed to continually enhancing and improving the appearance of our provincial historic sites all around Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: In relation to the road from Bonavista to Elliston that the Member for Conception Bay South mentioned, there are repairs on that road, Mr. Speaker. As the Member for Bonavista South, I actually sat down and met with council officials in the Town of Elliston and the Town of Bonavista and there will be continued improvements to the road from Bonavista to Elliston.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I do not know who you talked to, I do not know who you are talking to or who you are getting your information from, but I will give the facts on the District of Bonavista South, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Now that is not the road I wanted to go down, but I had no other choice but to rebut and correct the members across the way who got up in this House today and made some incorrect statements, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, I got up on my feet here today and I corrected some of the statements that were made on behalf of the great people of the District of Bonavista South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: We, as a government, most recently invested \$1.1 million in the Town of Bonavista, Mr. Speaker. From the Department of Business, Culture – I always mix that department up – Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. We made a big announcement recently in the Town of Bonavista, an announcement that included Phase III of the harbour front development. I would like, and I will put an offer out to anyone on the opposite site of the House, to come to the District of Bonavista South and I will give you a tour personally.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I will highlight how good the sites are in the District of Bonavista South, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I will take time out of my busy schedule so you will provide the correct information when you speak, Mr. Speaker. I will definitely do that. I will put that offer out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Come to the district this summer and I will take you out first-hand. I will let you

speak to the people who are involved in the tourism industry in the District of Bonavista South and you will get a different opinion on what you are saying. I have to put that point out there today, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: This government works very close with the players in the tourism industry – very close. We take the tourism industry very seriously, Mr. Speaker. That is not just words; we can give the facts and we can put out the numbers in relation to what we do as a government.

We will continue to support the growing tourism industry that we were a big part of actually creating, Mr. Speaker. This government on this side of the House invested money in the tourism industry over and over and over. What are we doing as a Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: What are we doing? What we are doing is working, Mr. Speaker. It is working. Look at all that is happening in the industry: innovation, creativity, a celebration of our culture, an exploration of heritage, and great business opportunities. This is what this government is all about, working in partnerships with the communities all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: We do have a track record of working in partnerships to make it work. We will continue as a government to make it work, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud to share information. Between 2009 and 2014, non-resident visitations increased by 22 per cent, Mr. Speaker, while non-resident tourism spending increased by 36 per cent. These are the facts that I am putting out to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador today. These are the facts that for some reason the Opposition does not want to listen to. They do not pay attention. Definitely, they do not pay attention to some of the programs and investments that this government puts out there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bonavista South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me protection. The other side is very outspoken. They do not want to listen to some of the facts that I am putting out to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will continue to put them out there, and I will continue to speak about the positive things that this government does on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Actually, in 2014, \$491 million has been spent in this Province through tourism – \$491 million, what a substantial amount of money. This is money that was spent in relation to people who actually visited the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. You say where did it go? You are not listening. Obviously, you are not listening on the other side. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to roll out and some of the members on this side of the House will continue to roll out the facts as they relate to the tourism industry.

In the past three years alone, our Province welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors from outside of this Province, Mr. Speaker – 1.5 million visitors from outside this Province. Each and every visitor spent money in the communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, in the businesses –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LITTLE: Mr. Speaker, they spent money in every community in Newfoundland and Labrador. There are many, many good stories that we can discuss in this House of Assembly about the economic business and how it relates to the tourism industry and the contribution that tourists make to this Province on a regular basis.

In Bonavista South there is an increase in new, small businesses. Great economic opportunities created by the investments that this government has made in the tourism industry. Businesses such as restaurants, cafés, convenience stores, bed and breakfasts, cottages, cabins, motels, hotels, boat tours, craft shops, cultural and heritage walking tours, all types of economic benefits that have been created because there is a growing tourism industry in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I can stand on my feet and be proud of the district that I come from, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: In the Town of Elliston, if you visit the town of Elliston, if you actually visited the town of Elliston, guess what? You should visit the Sealers Memorial, Home from the Sea campaign – another major project that this government invested in, in a partnership with the federal government and the private sector.

We, as a Province, have made significant investments in my district in Bonavista South. My district – I can say it without doubt – has improved immensely because of the co-operation of what department officials and government officials did on this side of the House, and we will continue to do as a government. We are committed to the people of this Province. We will definitely invest in the future. In Budget 2015 we invested again in the tourism industry. This government is all about finding new opportunities, and the tourism industry is a great, new opportunity – an opportunity to open up the doors for many businesses, businesses that did not exist in my district, in the District of Bonavista South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: We are a unique people. We believe in ourselves on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We believe in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. On this side of the House, we believe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: We can make a difference, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue as a government

to make a difference for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are a proud people. We are a strong people. We are a unique people, and we are very diverse right across the full Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and every region adds to the uniqueness and the prosperity that this Province will deliver for decades to come.

We are growing as a Province, and we will continue to grow with the leadership of this government. This government chose leadership. This government listens to the people. When the people from all over the world come to my district, the District of Bonavista South – the Bonavista Peninsula as well; the Bonavista Peninsula is a key place. Trinity on the Bonavista Peninsula, the Trinity Bight area, the communities there, they add to the tourism industry and they are great people. They know how to attract people.

Do you know what the word is that comes from tourists? We are coming back. I have had such a great experience we will come back. Do you know what? The word that I hear from time to time, or the words that I hear: We did not stay long enough. I am going to spread the word to my friends. We will come back to this great Province. This is the loveliest Province, the most beautiful Province in the whole Canada, in the Nation. Those are the type of comments that I hear, Mr. Speaker. We, as a government, will continue to work with all stakeholders in the tourism industry on a regular basis. We have proven that. We have a good track record. We have proven that.

We have a \$1.1 billion industry and on a yearly basis it continues to grow. That is not just our government that made that happen, Mr. Speaker. It is our government under the leadership, under co-operation, and with the stakeholders in the tourism industry that made that happen. We realize that. Together we made it happen.

We will continue to grow. We will make sure that the tourism industry grows in leaps and bounds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: There will be more business opportunities in the future. We will continue to

invest in the great tourism industry in this great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Our people, the people of Bonavista South, I can tell, are going to play a major role in being part of that process, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, in some cases tourism is not only about seeking the adventure, in some cases it is about revisiting history. I take great pleasure in revisiting history because I want to take this House of Assembly back a few years.

I am not going to take government too far back, but it helps for everybody to remember. It helps for the people who are watching at home, it helps for the media to remember as well, that tourism sometimes can be about history. I say that to the Member for Bonavista South too because I have to give him a reminder. I give all the government members a reminder. I will give the Opposition a reminder.

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: The resolution, Mr. Speaker: “BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House supports the Government’s decision to invest in the Province’s thriving tourism industry through initiatives that include providing for a \$2 million increase in the tourism marketing budget, bringing the total budget for tourism marketing to \$13 million.”

Here is my point, Mr. Speaker, about this resolution. If we go back in time – let’s go back to March 28, 2014. It is a very important point, I say to the government members here. As a matter of fact, let’s go back to Budget 2013. Remember Budget 2013? Of course you do,

because the hon. minister at the time, the Member for Conception Bay South happened to be sitting on the government side. He slashed the tourism budget by \$4 million in Budget 2013, at a time when oil was very high. We were supposed to have all these royalty dollars and everything rolling in. Of course people still debate about whether that money is gone into the proper channels or not.

In 2013, the former Tourism Minister of the day, the former Member for Conception Bay South said that they had to make some tough financial decisions. He did make this commitment on the part of the government, Mr. Speaker, in 2013 that in the next two years they would invest to top up this budget again by \$2 million a year, to bring it back up to \$13 million.

So here we are, Mr. Speaker, with a government motion that we would support the extra investment of an extra \$2 million to bring it up to \$13 million. Of course we do. Here is the issue; the budget was \$13 million back in 2013 when they cut it, when they slashed it down to \$9 million. Like I said, their commitment at the time was to boost it up by \$2 million every year until they got to 2015, at which time it would be \$13 million.

Mr. Speaker, it is funny when you look at it. If you are looking at \$13 million in 2013 numbers and we want to promote tourism so much, shouldn't we actually have a little bit more money in the tourism budget, I say to the hon. member and I say to the government too? Because you slashed the budget, now we have an awful lot of catching up to do. So I want to bring that point to government first that you cannot slash and expect to say that you are doing something very positive by putting \$2 million back in when you should have left it in there in the first place. That is the point I want to make to government.

It is great to think that we are doing something great. We are all here, yay, Mr. Speaker, we are putting \$2 million into the tourism budget and we are doing something great for the tourism industry. Of course we are, but I think we should probably be up to \$14 million by now.

I mean if you look at the list of the amount of money, for example, and the competitiveness of

course of the market out there when we are trying to capture tourists to come to our own Province, we have an awful lot up against us. I mean look at the Nova Scotia government and what they have done. They have already put enough money into their tourism budget right now that the government has already come out and said in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, they want to see tourism doubled by 2025.

That is a huge challenge they have put out to their own tourism industry and their own tourism department. Because we shortchanged ourselves over the last couple of years, now we have a bit of a mountain. We have a bit of mountain to climb here and groups such as Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador have said that.

One of the things of course that we are after hearing over the last little while is an issue, for example, with the tourism guide. Mr. Speaker, I use the tourism guide as much as I can whenever I am taking the family out on vacation. The tourism guide is actually a fun little item to have in your car too. The kids get interested in a vacation when they are going through it. They are learning about new places, particularly, because of the maps and everything like that, and you get to choose what is in that directory.

Mr. Speaker, 155 tourism operators, nearly 30 per cent of the operators were excluded from the guide this year because they did not comply with the new application rule requiring that insurance policy numbers be included on applications. Now some of this stuff is probably simple to cure. We know, for example – and again I will come back to the budgetary cuts they face. The \$4 million cut in the budget a couple of years ago probably affected the application process here and probably affected the whole operations of the tourism guide. I do not know. I am throwing it out there and perhaps government will answer to it.

Due to this action by government there are communities in the Province now that have no operators at all included in the guide. So, Mr. Speaker, now we are missing some things from the tourism guide too. I really want to see the new guide when it comes out, to see if government has actually improved on it. I have not had a chance to look yet.

How does this help the tourism industry? Mr. Speaker, every effort should be made by the department to ensure that all tourism operators who want to be in the guide are included. This is like giving somebody the Christmas Wish Book. Remember that? When we used to get the old Sears catalogue and we used to go through it when we were kids and pick things out. Tourists are no different than that. If they see a book of services and everything like that, if it is online, that is great. If it is in a tourism guide, not everybody has access to a computer and people take the guide with them.

Sometimes people, when they go out on a real adventure, Mr. Speaker, make plans, and other times it is look down the road and let's see where we are going to go. That is the fun part about tourism. That is what we hope tourists do when they come over here to Newfoundland and Labrador, besides the plans that they are making with their own families, is to get adventurous.

I say to the Member for Lab West I think that he would agree with that. It is like he was saying about the people coming from Quebec, pulling their own sleds and everything like that. You can see the sense of adventure in tourism too. So I think it is an important component that this guide be improved, and the restrictions they have had and the issues they have had with it that they would fix it.

Mr. Speaker, we have that issue. That is great. That is fine and dandy, but there are other issues too. I want to get into those too because they are many and varied. I think that Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, being the best spokespeople that we have when it comes to the tourism industry in this Province, would know a little bit more about this.

Here are other areas where government really need to put some pressure on, and they really need to invest too at the same time. They say here, "Access and transportation challenges continue to be a major strategic priority for the growth of the tourism industry." We know that. We know that we have challenges here. We have the Gulf of St. Lawrence. We have the Cabot Strait. We have prices for airfares that are really, really high. We have fuel surcharges on plane flights, and we have extra baggage handling fees.

These are all challenges that the Newfoundland and Labrador government and the tourism industry takes. Who is advocating from the government in Intergovernmental Affairs, for example, arguing the consumers' case – I would certainly like to see somebody from Service NL and from the consumers' end of things, dealing with consumer items, to actually argue the case about fuel surcharges and the price of flights.

We have seen that the price of jet fuel, for example, has come down but airfares have not. That is a good, legitimate complaint I think that any kind of tourist would have, or any kind of a business operator for that matter who wants to come and here and do business in Newfoundland and Labrador would have.

Mr. Speaker, Marine Atlantic is an issue. The old constitutional cattle cards, as I remember one member of the House put it many years ago. We have some pretty fine boats out there now, I would argue. The last time I was on a boat, it actually was not too bad. It was great compared to the old boats that we had. It is not bad. I do not think it is anyway. Some people do have issues with the boats.

We know that we have extra capacity on the boats, but the problem again, the fare structure on the boats has gone up astronomically over the last couple of years. Part of that argument happened to be, again, the fuel surcharge. You keep hearing Marine Atlantic coming back arguing that the price of rates has to go up, particularly for tractor-trailer drivers or drive-on traffic. All these rates are going up, including for passengers who are just crawling onto the boats with their knapsacks. We know, we have been out there at the boat, and we have seen people getting on there with their knapsacks, coming over again with a sense of adventure. They are coming over to have a look and see what Newfoundland and Labrador is all about. They want to come over here and see that.

Mr. Speaker, I think that Intergovernmental Affairs could be something to deal with this. They could be placing an argument with the federal government, number one, an economic argument here that also is well connected with tourism; they could be coming to the federal government with the economic argument to keep the fares low.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the protection. I appreciate the interest of some of the government members over there.

Again, when it comes to Marine Atlantic, I have to say that these fares have gone up an awful lot over the last little while. Certainly, if somebody from Intergovernmental Affairs made representation to the federal government about absorbing some of these costs and keeping costs down low, we would have a pretty good economy in Newfoundland and Labrador, and drive-in traffic into this Province I think would greatly increase. So it is an issue that I think could be handled a little bit better. Costing should be absorbed by the feds instead of being downloaded onto the consumer or onto the tourism operator. It is costing us and I think everybody knows about that.

Here is something else that Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador talked about, the provincial ferry system. "Areas of focused advocacy: capacity, infrastructure, reservation system, enhanced tourism information and amenities, scheduling and customer service."

Mr. Speaker, the quality of the boats – we know that we are getting a handful of new boats. We have one in Fogo. We have one coming to Bell Island. We have two new smaller boats on the service. I think it is seventeen different routes that we have right now. Some of the critical areas that are of concern: the crossing over to Blanc Sablon, and the *Apollo*, I think, is a grave concern. That boat now, I think, is forty-eight years old. It has far outweighed its time.

Unreliability for the boats running up the coast – again, would you get on a boat that had a lot of problems with it in the past? If you step on a boat, for example, that would be part of the interprovincial ferry system that grossly needs updating I will add again, there is security and peace of mind.

One only looks at British Columbia, for example, and the ferry system that they have there as regards to their reliability and the less problematic issues that they have. How many

tourists actually crawl on those boats to go up the coast of BC? Even the people who take the ferry system, for example, in BC you hardly hear issues that are happening over there when it comes to issues of getting around the coast of British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, there is lots of room here for improvement, where government needs to carry out its strategic programming in other areas to help along various industries like that. Let's remember another thing; this is pretty important because tourism right now is a major contributor to the Newfoundland and Labrador economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: It is a major contributor to the Newfoundland and Labrador economy. I think it is something in the order of 8 per cent, 9 per cent, or ten per cent of employment in this Province right now is tourism related. I think government needs to make careful note of that.

Mr. Speaker, a final point, because I see my time is running out. Consistency and highway signage, wayfinding and navigation initiatives; where is the TODS system? We are still waiting for that system to come out of proper signage and navigation. Even when you go across the Island here, if you are not used to taking that highway, to a stranger you can get lost pretty easy and it is pretty hard sometimes to find your sense of direction.

Mr. Speaker, those are a couple of points – of course we are going to support the motion to bring back funding back to 2013 levels. Absolutely we are going to do it. We would be foolish not to, but this government has to remember that they cut \$4 million from the tourism budget. They have to continuously ask themselves since they cut that \$4 million from the budget and put it back in \$2 million increments, how much did we actually lose in the intervening time period from 2013 in tourism dollars – how much did we lose in the meantime? We are at a point here now where we are playing catch up again.

Mr. Speaker, the work is laid for them. Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador has

spoken out very well on this issue. We have talked about the points here as regards to this. We will be supporting the private member's motion here today, but there is plenty more work here that government needs to do.

Thank you very much.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Again, it is a privilege to get up here today to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in Cape St. Francis. This motion today, we talk about tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the one thing that I listened to all the speakers here today – there is only one reason why we have the tourist industry in Newfoundland and Labrador and we can invest all the money we want, but we have the people. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are the reason why tourists come to this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I do not care where you go to in this world, but you will never find any people who are nicer, easier to deal with, and people that just go out of their way to help individuals when they come. That is the biggest thing that I hear from everyone that comes to this place.

I laughed – I was at an awards ceremony a little while ago for Tourism St. John's and the guy got up and he accepted his award and he told a story about how the guy was lost in St. John's and he stopped this guy and he asked him directions. The guy got in with him and showed him right where to go to in St. John's, where he had to go to. When he got out he told him who he was; it was the Mayor of St. John's.

It does not make any difference where you go to in this Province, that is the biggest thing that we have, that is the reason why – I know we do large investments and we have a beautiful, beautiful spot, but the number one thing we have

is our people and our people are the reason why that people will come to this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit, because I am Parliamentary Secretary to the new department. It is a department that is combined, and I really think it was a really good move by our government to combine with business and tourism in the one sector because as you look at – there are 18,000 people in this Province that are somewhat related to the tourism industry and work in the tourism industry. If you look, I think there are 2,500 different small businesses, whether they are travel or tourism businesses, that are – we talked about it here today. In last week's motion we talked about the fishery, but just to put it into perspective, just think about it.

If you would have told me ten or fifteen years ago that the tourism industry and the fishing industry in this Province would be on the same keel, I would never think so, but here it is. It is a billion-dollar industry, the fishing industry. The tourism industry is the same. If you told people that years ago, they would never, never believe you.

So I think it was a great move by this government to combine business and tourism because they fit each other.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: We can talk about the oil industry. We can talk about different huge industries in this Province, but small business is what keeps rural Newfoundland alive. That is where it is.

These are all small businesses that generate a lot of – whether it is a kayaking company up on the Southern Shore, which I had an opportunity to go up there one day. There was a bunch of students there from Quebec, and I went out with them. Just to go down around and in around the little shores in a kayak, it was absolutely beautiful. Like I said, there is just so much we have to offer.

In my district there are great things. I often go up – in Flatrock there is a thing, some of you probably know, it is called the Grotto. It was built by a priest. It is a shrine, and people come from all over the world. Actually, the Pope came and visited in 1984. I often go up there. I used to go up with my mother all the time, because she used to go up and do the Stations of the Cross and I would read the book. I would look and see where people were coming from. It was absolutely amazing – from all over the world coming here just to see different places like that.

That is what we have to offer. We have great things to offer. The investments we are doing – the tourism ads today, they are a little bit different. How to attract people today in the tourism industry is a little bit different, because today people use the Internet so much and they go in on YouTube. They go in and they can look at every house and every bed and breakfast in the Province. They can go in and have a look, and they get a great idea of what they see.

Last year, under newfoundlandandlabrador.com, there were 508,000 visitors to that site, just going in to see what we are all about. That is amazing. That is the stuff we have to invest in to make sure that people come to our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit today about the East Coast Trail. I have the opportunity sometimes to go on the East Coast Trail. I have some friends of mine who come down. They will call me up, I will drop them off on one end, and then they will go and I will pick them up on the other end whenever they give me a call.

AN HON. MEMBER: How come you don't walk with them?

MR. K. PARSONS: Because I am the one who drives and picks them up, but I do walk it a good bit too. Do you know what? I live in a community that I grew up in all my life and I did not realize how beautiful it was until I got aboard of it, got to walk along the East Coast Trail and see it in a different perspective.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made huge investments. The Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs was up in Mobile this

weekend. He made a huge announcement for government. I think it was \$362,000 for the East Coast Trail. What an investment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Since 2008, I believe altogether it is about \$1.5 million in an investment. On the East Coast Trail there are 260 kilometres. I do not think I will ever be able to walk it all, but 260 kilometres. That goes right from Pouch Cove – actually, it goes from Cape St. Francis right at the very end. It comes up through Pouch Cove and then goes on up through the Southern Shore. Every community, there are twenty –

AN HON. MEMBER: Thirty communities.

MR. K. PARSONS: There are thirty communities altogether along the East Coast Trail. If you went along the East Coast Trail and just saw it, Mr. Speaker, there are bridges, and there are walkways you can go up. In some places, I tell you, by the time you get to the top you are huffing and puffing, at least I am. Now some people who are in shape, like the Member for Gander, he is in great shape, so he could run up over those stairs I am sure.

It is an investment we have made over the last number of years that is right here in our Province. I hope someday to see that it will go all over the Province because it is unbelievable. Let me tell you, hats off to the people at the East Coast Trail. Most of them are volunteers.

I heard last week they were down – and the trail goes behind Robin Hood Bay. Last weekend, or the weekend before, there was a bunch of them who went down and collected the garbage from bags, Sobeys bags, Dominion bags, and stuff like that which just blew in. They picked it all up. We have a lot of volunteers who put a lot of time into that kind of stuff. It is a huge investment. We always talk about –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It is very difficult to hear the speaker, and the Member for Cape St. Francis is not normally difficult to hear. I ask for the co-operation of

House members on both sides of the House, please.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much for that protection. I need it.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say about the East Coast Trail, what an opportunity for everyone, your families to get out. It does not have to be tourism. It does not have to be people who come to this Province. It is a great place to walk, like I said.

The community I am from, when I walked along the trail I saw things that I never saw before. I thought it was absolutely beautiful. Just a couple of weeks ago – there are not as many around now, I do not know if there is either one down my way. The biggest thing a couple of weeks ago were icebergs. It was just amazing to be along the trail and talk to people. They were from all over Canada; people all over the world actually, who just came here to see icebergs. It was absolutely beautiful, just a nice sunny day. Everywhere you went, there were people walking and taking pictures and stuff like that.

So what a great investment in the East Coast Trail. Like I said, I commend the people because there are so many volunteers who really get out and do a lot of work for that organization. It is a really good organization. I am glad, like the minister, that our government is investing like we do in the East Coast Trail.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk – like I said, I mentioned a little while ago that I was down to an awards presentation with the City of St. John's. It was their twenty-fourth annual awards presentation. They recognized different groups and stuff like that for bringing tourism to St. John's.

I have lived next door to St. John's all my life, and there are a lot of things that open your eyes to what is available here in the city. There are so many different little tourism groups and organizations that it is unbelievable when you – I had a couple of cousins of mine come home from Texas, and I offered them to stay down in Flatrock with me but they decided to stay at the Sheraton in St. John's.

Every evening I met up with them – because I was working – and every day they had a different story for me. Every day they had a place that they said: oh, we had breakfast down there; oh, the people were so nice. We walked up to Bannerman Park and stayed there and watched the children swim and do different things, and how nice the people were. They walked down, and they were up on Signal Hill. Just from the Sheraton alone, every day they left, but the one thing they always came back and talked about were the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Do you know what? The reason they are going to come back – my mother grew up on Fogo Island. So they are going to come back and go to Fogo Island. I told them, I said let me tell you something, if you go out there, you are going to see it again because the people out there are absolutely beautiful, too.

Wherever you go in Newfoundland, tourism, our people are our best attribute. They are the best things we have. Bar none, our people are what promotes tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador. No matter what we invest in –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: – and that is just who we are, and I hope we always stay that way. I hope our children and our grandchildren grow up the same way we did, knowing that when a person visits, say hello to them, say how are you doing, and if they need your help, give them – like the mayor did, he took them to where they had to go. That is the things we have to do because that is what will bring people back to this Province.

One of the awards the City of St. John's offered was about conventions. The Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development was the big winner in the convention one, because they promote conventions all over the world. They attracted the Oceans convention that just here.

It is unbelievable the amount of work that goes into getting a convention here, but just look at what conventions do. We will have a new Convention Centre opening down in St. John's, and well invested because that brings thousands

and thousands of people. Conventions, what that does – people come here and they have a bit of work and everything else, and then they see what we have to offer. They go back, they get their families to come up, and they want to come back because they see what a beautiful place we have.

Mr. Speaker, while we invest in our ads, which are huge, and again, the increase in the investments that we have done this year now to invest an extra \$2 million to the new ads – like I said, the Internet is a huge part of what we are and where we got to go when we are doing our advertising. That is what people do today. They will Google and they will see what different things we are doing and what is a good place in this Province, so it is very important that we invest in this.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk a little bit about – I always talk about myself, different things that I like doing. We have a lot to offer even when people come for our recreational stuff. I love going up moose hunting and every year I go up we will always run into – I know people talk on the other side about people coming from away and the extra costs and stuff like that, but you should hear what they talked about when they come.

When you go in through Millertown and go up to the top of Red Indian Lake and you look back over the country and just see what is there, I tell you right now, no matter where they come from, all over the world they come here, they have never seen anything as beautiful. It is breathtaking; it is absolutely breathtaking what we have here to offer.

I think it is very important that our government continues to make this investment. I think it is very important what we did as a government to put business and tourism together. Right now, an industry of \$1 billion is huge; it is a huge industry in our Province. It employs a lot of people, it keeps rural Newfoundland alive, and it is what we need. Because people love to visit all of rural Newfoundland, just like St. John's, but they like to visit every part so it is important that we do that.

I really think it is really important that we continue to invest in tourism. I think it is a huge

investment this year that we made with the ads and everything else that we are going to do, but continue to invest in things like the East Coast Trail and things like down in Bonavista – I know the hon. member just got up that time from Bonavista South and you could just feel the passion that he had because he was talking about his community. You could feel how he was so – with the Bonavista lighthouse and everything else that is absolutely beautiful. Only a little while ago, I think the minister went to Bonavista and announced over \$1 million in investments.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is getting close and I have (inaudible). I know that the Opposition and the Third Party will definitely support this motion today, but we all have to realize that the number one thing we have in tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador are our people.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West, to close debate.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank all of the speakers who stood and took part in this debate today: the Member for Humber East, Port au Port, Conception Bay South, Bonavista South, St. John's East and Cape St. Francis. I listened to each one of the speakers and I must say there was some good dialogue. I hope that the Member for Conception Bay South do not think we are going to be good friends or anything now, but it is nice to see that we do agree on this motion.

I was a little bit surprised – not too much surprised by some of the comments from the Member for Humber East, but knowing his background and having worked with him in the tourism industry, I was a little bit surprised with some of the negativity that he talked about.

I remember back in 2005-2006 when the campaign ads were done here, and they were done – there was a decision made by government at the time that we were campaigning and marketing outside of the

Province, but the government said it was very important that we unveil the campaign that year here in the Province. It was done in Gander, and ironically, the Member for Humber East at the time was the most negative one in the room, that felt that it was not going to work because there was not enough in the campaign ads. So, I think he would have to agree with me now, almost ten years later, that those ads have been very productive and certainly have paid.

I heard the members talk about different things – the Member for Humber East, the Member for Conception Bay South, the Member for St. John's East – talked quite a bit about infrastructure. Talked about the roads, talked about some of the services or lack thereof within the Province. Do you know something? I agree with you. As a government, we recognize we always need to do more. The government realizes that. That is one of the reasons that we are stood here today talking about a \$2 million investment in tourism. So we realize that, and we will always try to continue to improve things. That is what it is all about: constantly trying to improve. So I agree with some of the points you made, very valid points.

I listened to the Member for Conception Bay South, and I have to say, you had me almost signed up to do your tour, but then you start talking about the negativities. I guess with my background in the tourism industry, I always took the negatives and because I am an optimist, I made positives of them. So, if you have to drive down the middle of the road, rather than worrying about driving down the middle of the road, why not advertise the fact that you can see what is on both sides? So rather than constantly trying to find the negative, let us look at the positives, because there are going to be negatives there. We know that. We know there are going to be negatives.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: You heard the Member for Bonavista South stand up. I thought he was extremely passionate. When he stood up, you could hear the passion; you could feel the passion. Did you notice how he stood up and he took his fifteen minutes and he rebutted some of

the things that were said? He did not want to sit here and listen to the negatives about his district. I am sure everybody in this House is the same. We do not want to hear the negatives that are out there. We realize – and as a government, I certainly admit that we can always improve. We will continue to do that.

The Member for St. John's East made a point that in 2013 the former Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation made a slash – I think was the word he used – of \$4 million, but in the process of trying to cut where we needed to cut, we cut where, strategically, we thought we could afford those cuts. I know, just for dealing in the tourism industry, we had a good part of our job done. What we had done was working. If you are building a house and you say I got my house built now and it is ready to move into. Are you going to continue building on the house just for the sake of building, or are you going to utilize what you have?

That is what we did in the tourism industry. We took that tourism industry and we brought it to a level that we wanted it to be. We felt that we were there then, so we could afford to take that cut at the time. Now, we realize, with the social media, with the advancement in technology, we now need to make investments in other strategic areas to improve on our tourism industry. I think our government is doing that well.

I am really pleased that the Member for Cape St. Francis was the final speaker. I always enjoy listening to him speak. I remember when I was doing some media training someone said to me one time: You have a believable voice. The Member for Cape St. Francis certainly has that voice. When he speaks – he thanked the Speaker for the protection he gave him, a big, brawny man like that – but when he speaks he is a very soft-spoken person. I thought it was a great way to finish the debate.

I am going to close on that now. I am very pleased that everybody is supporting it. I think one of the main points that every speaker made is that it is all about the people. You can bring the tourist here, but it is all about what we deliver to the tourists afterward, the impression we leave upon them.

I walked the North Head Trail a little while ago. I started at the Battery and I went up the hill and down through the North Head Trail. When I was coming out from the Battery, there were two little children there. A little boy about four-and-a-half years old and his small sister were sitting on the step. The little boy looked at me and he said: Sir, would you like to buy a rock? I had no money on me at all. I said: I would buy a rock from you, but I do not have any money with me. He said: Well, it is not an expensive rock. I said: Well, I do not have any money, but I tell you what I will do, when I get to my car I am going to come back and buy a rock off you. He looked at me and he said: That is okay, Sir; I will give you a rock. That is entrepreneurship, and that is what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are all about.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The resolution is carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

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