



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Volume XLVII

FIRST SESSION

Number 79

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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA*

Wednesday

20 March 2013

The House met at 2:00 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

**Statements by Members**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Mount Pearl South; the Member for the District of Kilbride; the Member for the District of Torngat Mountains; the Member for the District of Exploits; the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; and the Member for the District of Port au Port.

The hon. the Member for the District of Mount Pearl South.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this hon. House to recognize the Association for the Arts in Mount Pearl for their tremendous contribution to the culture and diversity of the City of Mount Pearl and indeed to the Province as a whole.

This group was formed on March 9, 2005 with twenty-four members. It has since grown to a membership of over 500, representing a variety of artistic disciplines.

Since its inception, this group has been actively involved in the community, organizing such activities as the annual ARTFUSiON Festival, Frosty Film Festival, a reading series by local authors, annual Arts in the Park summer activities and performance series, weekly arts workshops for children, and public workshops in such areas as writing, drawing, storytelling, juggling, and dance. They have also offered professional development workshops for artists, writers, and musicians as well as for members of the general public with interest in various artistic disciplines.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this hon. House to join me in commending the

Association for the Arts in Mount Pearl for the great work they are doing in promoting the arts and enhancing culture in my community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Kilbride.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DINN:** Mr. Speaker, I stand today to commend Mr. Leonard Ruby, an outstanding gentleman from my district.

At its recent AGM, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture announced that Mr. Ruby will be placed in the Hall of Fame in October 2013 for a lifetime of achievement in farming and as a community leader.

Leonard, who is now eighty-seven, started farming when he was a boy. He partnered with his two brothers in dairy farming enterprises. He continued dairy farming until 1987. Since then he has been growing vegetables to retail at local supermarkets and at their Ruby Line roadside stand. Even last summer, he had a fine crop of beets, carrots, and onions.

In the past Leonard has been part of many agricultural committees, including the Dairymen's Association. He has exhibited and shown cattle and vegetables at local exhibitions since 1937, winning many awards.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. DINN:** I cannot hear myself now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. DINN:** He has served on many church and community groups.

Through the years Leonard has been supported by his wife, Lena, who can be seen most summer and fall months selling at the roadside stand.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating one of the finest men I have ever met on his induction.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Torngat Mountains.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Ms Andrea Flowers of Hopedale on being awarded Woman of the Year in Nunatsiavut.

Ms Andrea Flowers, better known as Aunt Joy, was presented with this prestigious award on March 13 of this year by Nunatsiavut President Sarah Leo.

Aunt Joy is a well-known and respected elder in Hopedale and very involved in the community church as a chapel servant. Growing up in the community of Hopedale as a young boy, I spent many hours at her home and enjoyed her stories and her witty comedy.

Aunt Joy is best known for her fantastic ability in crafts and traditional clothing. She has made countless pairs of sealskin boots and mitts. I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have been fitted more than once with traditional clothing made by Aunt Joy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Ms Andrea Flowers, Aunt Joy, on being recognized as Inuit Woman of the Year.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FORSEY:** Mr. Speaker, on February 26 of this year, Superior Glove Works of Point Leamington in the District of Exploits and its parent company in Acton, Ontario, was recognized as one of Canada's Best Managed Companies. The National Award is sponsored by Deloitte, CIBC, National Post, Queen's School of Business, and MacKay CEO forums.

Mr. Speaker, Superior Glove Works is marking its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. The company employs fifty-one workers at its Point Leamington factory and manufactures 25,000 work and safety gloves a day. Branch Manager Frazer Stuckless said the company's products are top-notch using modern automation, however, he also said that manual labour is vital to the knitting of the safety gloves using fiberglass materials which is spun and woven at the plant.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Frazer Stuckless and his company, Superior Glove Works, on being recognized as one of Canada's Best Managed Companies.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. POLLARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I count it a privilege to rise in this hon. House today to honour a very special lady who graced this earth from July 10, 1923 until her passing on February 27, 2013 at the age of eighty-nine.

Mary Rebecca Saunders, born to Robert and Jermina Oxford of Springdale, wife of Arthur Saunders, was remembered in a service of celebration on Sunday, March 3, 2013 at her jam packed church.

This wonderful lady, along with her devoted husband, had fourteen children, eighteen

grandchildren and twenty-one great-grandchildren, all of whom she loved dearly. Her children still live and work in Springdale today, which is very unique.

She enjoyed knitting, completing puzzles, and spending quality time with family and friends. A lifetime member of the Home League, Mary was the oldest soldier of the Salvation Army, Springdale Corps and faithfully attended and supported her church.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in saluting Mary Saunders, a generous, loving, jovial lady who enriched all of our lives by leaving a legacy of love.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Port au Port.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CORNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the Town of Cape St. George for their commendable efforts in going green. Cape St. George is a small community on the Port au Port Peninsula and now offers curbside collection of compost and recyclables.

Since implementing this initiative in the community this past fall, the Town of Cape St. George is already enjoying the benefits. The goal is to reduce landfill waste by more than 50 per cent. The town has already seen a reduction of waste by approximately one ton per week.

Mr. Speaker, funds from the recyclables go towards supporting the two local schools' breakfast programs. Compost is being used for the benefit of all the residents.

Waste reduction is the central goal of the Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy. The residents of Cape St. George are a shining example of how we, as Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians, can play an active and vital role in reducing waste.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join with me in applauding the Town of Cape St. George and its residents in undertaking this green initiative.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works, and Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to provide an update on the impact that investments by this government are having to reduce the waitlists for housing assistance through the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

This government has made significant investments in social housing and home repair programs for homeowners with low and moderate incomes. The benefits of these investments are demonstrated through improvements in the condition of social housing across the Province. Today, 70 per cent of social housing owned and maintained by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is now considered to be in top condition, up from 30 per cent in 2007.

Since 2009, tenants and applicants are seeing the benefits of our investments first-hand. Investments in social housing, through the Provincial Social Housing Plan have resulted in a 30 per cent reduction in the social housing waitlist. Mr. Speaker, it used to be above 1,200, it is now down below 900. By increasing

investments through the Provincial Home Repair Program over the last six years, the waitlist for assistance through that program has dropped by almost 75 per cent, from 4,300 down to 1,300.

Mr. Speaker, this government remains committed to providing safe and affordable housing options to those with low and moderate incomes. As a result, those seeking housing assistance are now available more quickly, and are more quickly able to receive the support they need.

As Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, I am encouraged by the improvements that we have achieved to date and the positive impacts that these are having on Newfoundland and Labrador Housing clients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his press release. I say to the minister, there is no doubt there are a lot of times that RRAP does help a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador, but it is even to the point now where people cannot even get an application. That is how much money, the lack of money, should be put in there.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the minister, if you think the housing is doing so good and the wait-list, the reason we do not have a wait-list is people are being taken off the list. It is not because people are finding housing or finding Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. They are actually being taken off the list.

Mr. Speaker, if any of them do not think there is a problem with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, come out to Corner Brook and I will show you the list we have in our office, just our

office alone. One of the problems you have is when someone leaves a unit – I know one unit that is up to six or seven months vacant because they cannot get the work done to move in.

I ask the minister to look at that kind of stuff and to ensure that people do get affordable housing across the Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for St. John's Centre.

**MS ROGERS:** I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Repairs and modifications to the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation housing stock were long overdue. Municipalities, housing advocates, and the general population are adamant that Newfoundland and Labrador is in the middle of a housing crisis with no relief in sight.

Seniors downsizing, students, young working families with child care costs and student loans, single people or first-time home buyers, workers in areas of resource development – there are thousands of low- to moderate-income families who cannot afford decent housing and are spending way more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter.

This government has promised a home ownership assistance program. Where is it? This government has still not developed an overall housing strategy for the Province –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to acknowledge Tuesday, March 26 as Check Registration Day.

Check Registration Day is an important part of Fraud Prevention Month as it promotes awareness and prevention of investment fraud. This day encourages consumers to check for legitimate licences and/or registrations of any financial advisors, real estate agents or brokers, insurance agents or brokers, mortgage brokers, and securities providers. This is especially important before entering into any investment agreement or business transaction.

Mr. Speaker, the Financial Services Regulation Division of Service NL works to protect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from fraud. The Service NL Web site, [www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca](http://www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca), features a list of currently licensed or registered service providers. Consumers are encouraged to check a firm or individual's legitimacy against this list. Service NL is a member of the Canadian Securities Administrators and the registration of securities providers can be checked through their Web site at [www.aretheyregistered.com](http://www.aretheyregistered.com).

Mr. Speaker, Service NL encourages all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to take appropriate steps to protect themselves against fraud. Awareness is a consumer's number one defence. Almost 30 per cent of Canadians believe that at some point in their lives they have been faced with the threat of investment fraud. This type of fraud typically involves significant sums of money and can leave its victims devastated.

If consumers feel they are the victim of fraud, they may report their case to the Financial Services Regulation Division of Service NL, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary or the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, for Check Registration Day, I encourage all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to become more educated about fraud and to check the registration of any firm or

individual offering an investment opportunity before entering into an agreement. In the fight against fraud, knowledge is power.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, March, as the minister stated, is Fraud Prevention Month. Each year, thousands of Canadians are defrauded and there is no typical victim. Fraud targets Canadians of all ages and of all walks of life.

Mr. Speaker, people who pull off these scams are often creative and well organized, and they are getting better at it. In our lives, we are vulnerable to these professional criminals, so it really is incumbent on each of us to be aware and to recognize the tactics of these fraudsters.

Common forms of fraud include: prize lottery scams, work-at-home job opportunity scams, anti-virus scams, and the list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the minister said, anything that the consumer can do to protect themselves, such as checking registration of an individual or firm offering investment opportunity, we should do this and make ourselves more proactive against this type of criminal activity.

One thing, Mr. Speaker, that arises around the issue of fraud is that many people are too embarrassed to report the theft. In order to stop this, we must report, Mr. Speaker. According to stats, the Competition Bureau received an average of 20,000 requests and complaints. Mr. Speaker, that is no small number.

Knowledge is indeed power, and we need to protect our friends and family and to use our tools that we have to report these crimes.

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 would like to thank the minister as well for the advance copy of his statement.

I would like to note a couple of things about this release. Again, it is good for government to be coming forth and giving everybody advance notice and giving them a little bit of education when it comes to fraud, particularly as is going on today – no more so than when you just look at the Internet, how prevalent fraud has become, and how easy it is through e-mail and that sort of thing for it to be pulled on somebody.

I am just wondering about government's message here with regard to the outreach that they doing here, because what they are talking about is the setting up of access through the Internet, but not a lot of areas of the Province have Internet availability. I would just like to bring that forward to government here, to possibly have a contact number, a phone number to contact with regard to that. As well as that, consider registering volunteer groups who are going through fraud when it comes to their fundraising efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In February, the Federal Environment Commissioner slammed the C-NLOPB for not

being prepared for an oil spill in the North Atlantic. In his last report, Commissioner Scott Vaughan said the federal and provincial governments, through the C-NLOPB, are not prepared for a spill off our shores.

I ask the minister: Oil spills can threaten our offshore environments, so why have you not pressed the C-NLOPB and offshore operators to be better prepared?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said yesterday, safety is a primary concern of all of us when it comes to the offshore, but a secondary and very significant concern is that of the environment. We certainly take very seriously issues that can affect the environment, and oil spills are something that can have an adverse effect, as we have seen in the Gulf.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing here is we are working with the C-NLOPB. As I indicated last week, I met with the Chair and the vice-chair on a separate matter dealing with estimates in relation to production. We will do the same in relation to the protection against oil spills.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, this week, in response to an oil spill off of BC, or concerns in BC, the federal government announced improvements in oil tanker inspections and regulations, yet the Premier and her federal cousins have done nothing in this Province to increase liability caps on operators currently set at only \$30 million.

When are we finally going to see an increase in oil spill liability caps in this Province?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In dealing with the oil industry in this Province, we have to recognize the tremendous wealth that is brought to our Province as a result of the investments of these companies in offshore and what it produces for our Province.

Also, in relation to the Member for Humber Valley, we are seeing the possibility of enormous oil resources on the West Coast of the Province. There will have to be balancing there, Mr. Speaker, between the economic benefits and the protection of the environment.

We look at all of that. It is certainly something that we will take into account and I will pass on to my colleague for further discussion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We realize we have seen in recent months, of course, the impact that an oil spill can have. We have seen about \$28 billion spent just in the Gulf of Mexico because of the Deepwater Horizon. Liability caps are very important.

Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned about the interest on the offshore of Western Newfoundland and government still has no regulations in place for hydraulic fracturing in our Province.

Aside from the environmental assessment for individual projects, any other government oversight is still unknown.

I ask the minister: Why are you not following the example in New Brunswick and establishing provincial regulations on hydraulic fracturing?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To pick up where my colleague left off, obviously there is a balance between the economic and the environment. Our environmental assessment is a very robust assessment that covers all aspects of the activity that would be carried out – fracking included – in any well that is drilled, especially this now being drilled on land that would proceed out underneath the sea.

This assessment we will look at. Also, when we look at the assessment, the officials who are dealing with that, I say to the hon. member opposite, naturally will be looking to other jurisdictions to get what is the best practices and to make sure that we are fully cognizant of what needs to be done with regard to protecting the environment and insisting that any proponent follow those guidelines.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What are missing are the regulations, and that is what we are referring to, because if you want to protect the environment and truly attract investment into the Province, there need to be secure regulations around hydraulic fracturing. As I said, people in the industry need to know what is allowed and what is not allowed, and what and when this will be forthcoming.

I ask the minister: With over twenty billion barrels of oil, potential oil off Western Newfoundland, and thousands of jobs at play, why are you so disengaged in this file?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Nothing, Mr. Speaker, could be further from the truth. We are very much involved with this file and this proposal that is coming forward with regard to drilling activity on the West Coast. As a matter of fact, it will cover two jurisdictions, as the member is quite aware.

The C-NLOPB will be looking at the offshore, whereas the provincial government, through its assessment, will be looking at onshore. As it proceeds under our aquifer as the most important thing here with regard to that drilling operation, will be protection of the groundwater. We are going to make sure everything is done and the proponent realizes that before anything happens that all aspects of that project have to be given to us.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it is no question we will keep pressing for the regulations for the industry and for the people of the Province. It is something they are looking for.

Mr. Speaker, most people are in agreement with a full-day kindergarten program. Indeed, full-day kindergarten is offered in most other provinces and territories, yet this government is content to leave our children behind by denying them access to this great program.

I ask the Premier: How high a priority is the delivery of a full-day kindergarten model in this year's budget?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, we have never said that we would not commit. Our

intervention, Mr. Speaker, has been \$4.8 million in the 0-3, 0-6 age range. Never question – let's get the facts straight, Mr. Speaker. Our investment per student capita in this Province, Mr. Speaker, has gone up 80 per cent since 2003. Let's get the facts right, Mr. Speaker, our education system is second to none, quality education in this Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It appears I do not need to remind the minister to wash his hands today, as they have done this with full-day kindergarten at the expense of our students.

I ask the minister: Will you now commit to a pilot program for full-day kindergarten where classroom space exists, and will you also commit that any new schools built in the Province will be designed to have space for this vital program?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** No, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to commit to that today. Look at the facts in our school system, Mr. Speaker. We have gone from having the highest dropout rate to the second lowest in the entire country, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, our students are performing at rates that were not seen before. So our investment in education is paying off in dividends, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, today government announced funding for the Corner Brook hospital.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JOYCE:** There is a saying, *déjà vu* all over again.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is a saying, *déjà vu* all over again. In 2011, the Member for Humber East stated construction will begin in 2012. Now we learn that the design work may begin this year.

I ask the Premier: Why has this government continuously made false commitments to the people of the West Coast, and how can we feel confident that this commitment will be met?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What happened today in Corner Brook is a shining example of how our Premier operates. When she says she is going to do something, she does it, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** We made a commitment to the people of Corner Brook, but we also have to make a commitment to the people of the Province to ensure we have the best facility and one that is necessary for the area; \$227 million announced today for the Corner Brook hospital.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** What member in this House would not want a \$227 million announcement in their district over the next three years, Mr. Speaker? What we have is a situation where Stantec did a review. It looked at the best facility for the area. The cost of the hospital is estimated to be between \$500 million and \$600 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible) cheap out on the West Coast because we heard this since 2007. This is the same Premier who made the commitment to the hospital in the original size \$1 billion. Now it is right sized, which is downsized, Minister, and you know it.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health said this morning that the Corner Brook hospital will be the right facility at the right time. Rightsizing is, of course, code for downsizing, and right time is no doubt code for the 2015 election when construction coincidentally may begin.

I ask the Premier: Why has your commitment downsizing the regional hospital without any input from the frontline workers or the people on the West Coast?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

May I remind the member opposite of the opening of the Stephenville hospital without doors, or doors without knobs on them in 2003 for an election, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, this hospital will be a 260-bed hospital that will have 100 beds for long-term care. It will have the acute care facilities. It will

have in-patient mental health services and a hostel.

Stantec looked at the hospital, Mr. Speaker. They looked at what was needed for the area. They looked at the master plan in terms of the function of program required.

I am a bit disappointed in the member opposite; he has pressed so hard to have a hospital built. We are going to spend \$227 million in three years and he is still not happy, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** I apologize to the minister if the people in Corner Brook cannot get health service because of false commitments. I am sorry if they cannot get health care. Just to let you know, if what you just said is correct there will be a decrease on the West Coast of acute care beds – if what the minister just said is correct. That is something the people of Corner Brook do not know.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of safe drinking water is a risk for many municipalities. There are over 250 boil water advisories affecting about 170 communities in our Province.

I ask the minister: Why isn't your government's drinking safe water strategy reducing the number of boil order water advisories on THM levels?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to clean drinking water in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, that has to be a top priority not only for that side of the House but for this side of the House as well.

Back in 2001, under a former Administration there was a solid strategy that was put in place

as a result of the Walkerton crisis where seven people died and over 2,000 got sick. That spurred a solid strategy –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** – that this Province has built upon since that time. We stand by that strategy as being what is necessary right now in order to ensure that everyone in this Province has the opportunity for clean drinking water.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** I say to the minister, I know 160 communities that will disagree with your strategy and feel it is not working. There are about 120 communities in our Province affected by high THM levels. Some have THM levels that are double and triple the national standards.

I ask the minister: What is government's plan for communities whose THM levels exceed the limits established by Environment Canada?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, through Municipal Affairs we try to provide the necessary financial resources. Since 2008, Mr. Speaker, we have invested \$50 million of provincial money which leveraged \$114 million of municipal and federal government money. We are looking at least seventy-two water treatment projects in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have provided that.

In addition to that, from my Department of Environment and Conservation, we have made sure that we have provided other resources, namely, workshops and so on to make sure that we have certified people in these communities looking after these systems.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS JONES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over 500 Aboriginal workers have been trained through the Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership to work at Muskrat Falls. Government committed that there would be hiring practices giving preference to Aboriginals, meaning the Innu, other Aboriginals, and Labradorians.

I ask the government today – because I have met with the Innu, Inuit, NunatuKavut, along with other Labradorians who have many concerns that they are not getting hired – why is the priority not being given to these workers when it comes to jobs at Muskrat Falls?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Guiding the development of the Lower Churchill Project is a benefits agreement between Nalcor and the Province. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the hiring there, the primary beneficiaries are to be the Aboriginal peoples, the people of Labrador, and then the people of the Island.

Mr. Speaker, as of January 2013, there is 369 people working on Muskrat Falls; 101 of these are residents of Labrador and fifty-four of them are from Aboriginal groups.

What I have to indicate to the member opposite that a lot of hiring that is currently going on, it is all on the Web site. It is being monitored, Mr. Speaker. Nalcor's contractors and subcontractors are obligated to comply with the benefits agreement. There will be a monthly announcement, Mr. Speaker. We are monitoring closely to ensure that the benefits agreement is being complied with.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS JONES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand that the hiring preferences have been negotiated and they are part of the collective agreement with the Resource Development Trades Council, and they stipulate that the Innu and other Aboriginals and Labradorians have the priority for hiring. I have discussed this with a number of the companies that have contracts on the site, and what I am being told is that they are not able to hire many of these Aboriginals and Labradorians because they do not have union membership.

I ask the government if they are aware of this, and I ask them what is being done to monitor this practice to ensure that more Labradorians and more Aboriginal people get employment at this project.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am aware that the unions are aware of the benefits agreement. For example, Mr. Speaker, the RDC which I think represents sixteen unions that will be working at different parts of Muskrat Falls, are certainly aware of it. Mr. Speaker, as of June to December 31, 2012, there had been 185 Labrador residents worked or working on Muskrat Falls.

Obviously, what the member opposite says is correct in terms of qualifications and union memberships, but we have worked, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that members of Aboriginal communities especially – especially the Innu Nation – receive employment preference.

We are certainly aware of and working with the unions on that issue.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

He has time for one quick question.

**MR. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I attended Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Avalon Regional meeting on Friday where the IBRD Minister discussed regional development. I thought it was ironic that the government that abandoned rural economic development now want to get municipalities to do it.

I ask the minister: Does this mean that government plans to download rural development to small municipal councils who are so strapped for cash they cannot even chlorinate their drinking water?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Friday night we had a great discussion with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. Their leadership, who was very supportive and very vocal in terms of initiatives we have taken in terms of working with them, in terms of economic development – certainly supportive of it. Forty members there from the Avalon in terms of municipal councils, I spoke to them and they are very excited in what we are doing. We are continuing to work with them, driving economic development in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Certainly, what he got from the meeting is not what we got, or most of the people in that room got. They are very excited about working with us. They are going to continue to do it, the good work in economic development in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are certainly going to continue it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

Parents, students, and staff of the Virginia Park Elementary School continue to wait for word on when the construction of their new facility will begin, with my support, Mr. Speaker. They will have heard in the news that the Minister of Education has directed the Eastern School Board to cut \$5.5 million from its budget and that most of that will come from capital expenditures.

I ask the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker, if he will commit today that the money to construct the new Virginia Park school will be in this year's Budget.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, she is going to have to stay tuned as to what is going to appear in the Budget. I would suggest that she leave her spin at home and stick to the facts as she would know it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

The Premier's Muskrat Falls sanction party in December cost the people of Newfoundland and Labrador over \$16,000, \$4,000 of which was the cost of postponing the original time that she had scheduled.

I ask: When the Premier threw her \$16,000 party for herself, did she already know she was going to fire hundreds of people in a few months?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know where the NDP stand on Muskrat Falls. They do not support it, despite, Mr. Speaker, the number of high-paying jobs that will be created for union members in Muskrat Falls. So despite that, we had a situation where there was a sanction event. The sanction event was to celebrate what will be and will go down in history as one of the most significant events in Newfoundland and Labrador history.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Muskrat Falls is about the future of this Province. It is about providing for our children and grandchildren. It shows the vision we have, and the lack of vision and the lack of plan that they have over there.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS MICHAEL:** Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister of Finance is ready to say that \$16,000 was worth the party when he is looking at people who have lost their jobs from this government.

Mr. Speaker, government has hired Deloitte and is paying them \$4 million to find \$15 million annually in savings across government. In the media this weekend, for free, the Heavy Civil Association suggested another means of saving money: issue public works tenders early. Tenders issued ahead of the construction season will allow for better budgeting and planning for all in the industry. This has happened in the past in this Province and it happens in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance if this government is prepared to adopt this winning policy.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that I have met with the Heavy Civil Association. We have had some very good discussions and communication is very important to this government. We have made significant investments in this Province since we took over government and, I tell you, we make no apologies for the significant investments we made. We will continue to work with industry stakeholders to continue making those investments in the best interests of the people of the Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

So they are not going to look at this policy that is being recommended. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, the federal loan guarantee stipulates the federal government and lenders appoint an independent engineer charged with reviewing the DG3 capital cost estimates of Muskrat Falls. It further stipulates the Province foot the bill for this company's work.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance: Has this company been put in place, and if so, what is its name?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The federal loan guarantee actually outlined the name of the company. I cannot remember the name right now, but I certainly can find out for the member opposite. I am pleased to say that the federal loan guarantee has continued to be worked upon and finalized, Mr. Speaker, and that construction is going on with Muskrat Falls. Lots of union members are making lots of money, despite the lack of support from the NDP.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I just have to make one comment, Mr. Speaker –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS MICHAEL:** – if there is any spin going on in this building today, it is the spin from the ministers on the other side of this House. Although Muskrat Falls will be the biggest investment in the history of the Province and will saddle huge debt on a generation yet to be born, government is very sparing with project details. People are left to find out potential project troubles from dedicated people doing investigative work on their own. The recent North Spur concerns are a prime example.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: When will she end her government's obsession with secrecy and offer monthly updates, good news and bad, to this House on the progress of the Muskrat Falls Project?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENNEDY:** Mr. Speaker, we have top-notch engineers working at Muskrat Falls. Mr. Speaker, we have not only the Nalcor engineers but we have also out-of-Province engineers who are working.

I find it insulting that the member opposite has to always cast aspersions on these Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are working at Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, the people of Nalcor who are doing what is best for this Province. It is very unfortunate, but that appears to be the way she looks at things.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thirteen of twenty-one public water supplies in my district are currently on boil advisories; two local service districts for more than fifteen years, and two towns for over ten. Some have received funding in the past but the advisory has not been lifted.

I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs, if they have a plan to provide safe and clean drinking water to public water supplies so that people are not forced to boil water for decades?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. O'BRIEN:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2008 we have invested \$634 million approximately in regard to water and waste water projects across this Province. As the Minister of Environment and Conservation referenced, \$50 million of that was in seventy-two water treatment projects in the Province as well.

Also in 2008, we started a comprehensive overview of safe water issues in Newfoundland and Labrador. Out of that came our portable water systems, which we have thirteen units now in operation and we have probably about another eight or so that are moving through the stages and getting to completion in the short order, probably this spring.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly acknowledge investments made in water, but basic problems are not going away.

Funds from the provincial government provided an unincorporated community of Grandois an on ground waterline, but it freezes up when the weather gets cold. This means that seniors are forced to collect water from ponds to wash dishes, take baths, and flush toilets in a so-called have Province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Will his department take responsibility for insulating this water line so that seniors can have what most of us take for granted a year-round water supply?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. O'BRIEN:** Mr. Speaker, each and every year since 2010 we have had about a \$700 million ask from municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador concerning various

projects, mainly water, waste water, roads, whatever it may be. We have invested heavily, \$630-odd million since 2008 in those particular projects. I would advise the particular community that you are referencing to make an application under Municipal Capital Works, and surely we will have a look at it and see exactly what we would do to alleviate the problem.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, industrial development can be a threat to the safety and integrity of our water supplies. Municipal watersheds are facing threats from the start up of a fracking industry in the Province, as well as from mining interests that want to drill in watershed areas.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the government: Why is government allowing mineral or oil exploration within watershed areas?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Again, Mr. Speaker, to continue on where I left off with another hon. member on the other side, is that we take very seriously any, any intrusion on our environment. We also make sure that if anyone is going to proceed with any project that they would have to follow strict guidelines, they would have to present exactly what they are doing.

We make sure, from my officials and at least three other departments, that this is going to be done correctly because we understand, as well as everybody else, that water supplies have to be protected. We make sure everything is done to provide the people of this Province with the

satisfaction and comfort that it has been carried out.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the findings from our water sampling program should ring alarm bells within the Department of Health, particularly. Government has known about the THM issue as early as 2001. There are many reports stating that THMs cause an increased risk of bladder and colorectal cancers. People thirty-five and older run close to twice the risk of getting such cancers where samples of water containing seventy-five parts per billion exist. That is below the Health Canada standard.

Knowing these statistics, can the minister tell this House of her concerns for water safety?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is about water safety, but more importantly, it is about our people of the Province and making sure that they are being protected. Our first line of defence with water is chlorine. I think I have already explained when that broke down in Walkerton, that basically, we had seven people die and we had 2,000 people who were sick; not only that, but there were long-term effects. When we look at our water supply, our first line of defence is to make sure that we are doing the proper disinfection that makes sure that these outbreaks would not occur.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for St. John's East, for a very quick question.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Seventy-five parts per billion is an alarming statistic. What is government going to do to address the high THM levels found around the Province?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Again, very quickly – because I know there is a discussion following where it will become clear – it is all about risk management. We understand about THMs and we work with the municipalities, making sure that they have the certified individuals and making sure that they have options. We also make sure that we put on our Web site all of the information that is required for people to make the right choices when ingesting any water in this Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The time for Oral Questions 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 Burgeo – La Poile.

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

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

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador currently has the highest rate of unemployment in Canada; and

WHEREAS the government of Newfoundland and Labrador anticipate a labour shortage of 70,000 people by 2020; and

WHEREAS eliminating the career practitioner knowledge base is contrary to attaching people to the labour market; and

WHEREAS employment assistance services, EAS agencies, are grassroots hubs in communities, providing services like skills development, resume development, interview skills, facilitating attachment to the labour market and the community; and

WHEREAS EAS agencies help individuals with complex needs find and maintain employment in communities throughout the Province; and

WHEREAS EAS agencies have been serving thousands of people for years, building expertise and rapport; and

WHEREAS loading the workload of 226 employees onto 139 Advanced Education and Skills employees would be an overwhelming expectation, increasing staff turnover and thus decreasing rapport with clients; and

WHEREAS EAS funding comes from the EI fund, built by workers to help them when and where they need it most; and

WHEREAS moving services away from people who lack the means to travel long distances is not in line with the Labour Market Development Agreement's principle of citizen-centered service;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reverse the decision to cut funding to EAS in the Province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This is another one of these petitions that I have entered, and it is amazing the speed at which they are coming across my desk from all over this Province. This one actually has signatures mostly from the St. John's area. Certainly, these offices here in St. John's and the Metro region are having a tough time as well, because they have an overflow of people who they are dealing with, trying to steer them in the right direction and provide help to these people, to try to attach them to the labour force.

I guess we are all going to get a bit of info tomorrow as we hear the federal budget and see what changes are going to be made, especially when it comes to this. I know there has been a lot of talk about how the feds are not happy with how the Provinces have handled this.

I find it hard to disagree with them in some cases, given that we have been receiving this money since 2009 or so; we have received hundreds of millions and yet we have made the short-sighted decision to close these offices down and not do what they are supposed to do, which is attach people to the labour market and place this on the EAS offices – which would do good work, but they do not have the manpower to do the amount of work that they are going to be called upon to do. It is simply not good enough.

I am sure I am going to be entering more of these, because they are coming from all areas of the Province, including Stephenville and Corner Brook. I appreciate the opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the process of slickwater hydraulic fracturing or fracking injects hazardous chemicals into rock formations to extract oil and is polluting groundwater and air across North America; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has commissioned an assessment of the potential environmental impacts of shale oil and gas extraction in Canada, including fracking; and

WHEREAS Quebec, Nova Scotia, and a number of US states have halted fracking, and others are introducing regulations specific to fracking; and

WHEREAS it is incumbent upon the provincial government to ensure that our natural environment is protected from harmful industrial processes;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to impose a moratorium on slickwater fracking until it develops comprehensive regulations and ensures that each proposed project undergoes a conclusive environmental assessment to determine whether it is safe for the environment, the integrity of water supplies, and human health.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of probably many I am told are going to be coming across my desk, and this one comes particularly from areas of the West Coast that are probably going to be under the button of the fracking industry when it begins over there. Indeed, it has already begun as early as 2002. This comes from areas such as Piccadilly, Stephenville, Western Bay, Port au

Port, Lourdes, and it just goes on with the number of communities: Kippens and Stephenville.

The members of this House of Assembly have to be made aware that water is of great concern to the people over on the West Coast, the Western Region of the Province, not only in Labrador and the Island portion of the Province of Newfoundland but all areas. This is a big concern when it comes to industrial development. Fracking is going to do more damage than what it is for positive economic benefits.

There is nobody who is antidevelopment when it comes to this. We are saying and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are saying to slow down. Let us take a second look before we do any other damage to our environment. Let us look after what is making us great, one of those things that happens to be the integrity of water supplies. Everybody has a right to clean water, Mr. Speaker, and we do not need to see water in this Province taken under threat.

I will leave it at that for now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

**MR. BENNETT:** 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 has been an agreement between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Government of Canada to recognize the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band; and

WHEREAS persons submitted applications, with required documents, for registration in the Band up to the application deadline of November 30, 2012; and

WHEREAS the reported number of applications received by the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band is in excess of 100,000; and

WHEREAS the reported number of applicants now registered as members is approximately 22,000; and

WHEREAS the agreement between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Government of Canada for recognition of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band is scheduled to end on March 31, 2013; and

WHEREAS the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band has requested, but has not received, an extension to the agreement to process the remaining applications; and

WHEREAS to date there is no decision on how to deal with the remaining applications;

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 Newfoundland Federation of Indians and the Government of Canada to provide a fair and equal review of all our applications.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions keep coming. It is ironic that the last day when they can have their application processed is March 31, 2013. The day that we entered Canada was March 31, 1949. It is on the anniversary date of all of us coming into Canada.

This is an application by people who are claiming native ancestry, 22,000 of which have been processed and 100,000 applicants in total. There is always a fear that people are going to be left behind. It would be very unfortunate. It would cause discrimination without any particular valid reason simply because of time, simply because the application process is under-resourced. It is under-resourced by the federal government.

There is absolutely no cost to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to proceed and to push and make representation to the federal government. The petitioners certainly request and petition this House of Assembly to impress on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to support them in this application.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS as a result of a recommendation in the Green report about wrongdoing in the House of Assembly, there is now legislation that protects anyone who speaks up with evidence of financial abuse or other impropriety in the legislative branch; and

WHEREAS it is unfair for one group of civil servants to be protected by whistle-blower legislation when another group is not; and

WHEREAS Justice Green stated that the financial wrongdoing in the House of Assembly might have been discovered sooner if whistle-blower legislation had been in place; and

WHEREAS the Cameron inquiry into ER-PR testing found that problems with tests would have come to light sooner, therefore lessening the impacts on patients, if whistle-blower legislation had been in place; and

WHEREAS the Task Force on Adverse Events recommended an amendment to the Regional Health Authorities Act to provide legal protection for employees reporting occurrences or adverse events; and

WHEREAS whistle-blower legislation is in place elsewhere in Canada and the provincial

government promised similar legislation in the 2007 election but has not kept that promise;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to enact whistleblower legislation to protect public sector employees in provincial departments and agencies, including public corporations, regional health authorities, and school boards.

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

It now being 3:00 p.m. and being Private Members' Day, I now call on the Member for The Straits – White Bay North to do his private member's motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move the following private member's motion, seconded by the Member for St. John's East:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has more than 160 communities affected by Boil Water Advisories (BWAs); and

WHEREAS more than 150 communities are currently dealing with potentially harmful levels of trihalomethanes (THMs), a possible human carcinogen; and

WHEREAS covering the cost of supplying basic services like safe drinking water is challenging for most municipalities due to limited resources from taxpayers and the provincial government; and

WHEREAS municipalities are forced to make unreasonable choices such as turning off their chlorination systems because they do not have the revenue to maintain trained staff to properly run their drinking water systems; and

WHEREAS reduced confidence in public drinking water can lead to people choosing alternative water supplies like untreated ponds and roadside springs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge government to address the issue of safe drinking water in the Province by developing a new Newfoundland and Labrador Safe Drinking Water Strategy that will include but not be limited to:

A comprehensive, ongoing public education program in plain language to inform the public about:

The risks of using roadside springs and ponds, and the need for regular testing of private wells;

The distinctions between safety and aesthetics of drinking water, and how to reduce the exposure to THMs;

Detailed information to accompany each BWA, including reasons for the Advisory, safe uses of water and proper boiling procedures;

A review of capital and operating grants to enable communities to obtain the trained staff and equipment to build, operate and maintain drinking water facilities;

Research and development of water treatment systems appropriate to the Newfoundland and Labrador environment.

Mr. Speaker, the United Nations has recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights. It is quite essential, Mr. Speaker, that we as a Province in Canada are able to ensure that safe and clean drinking water is a high priority, if not the top priority for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I recognize the provincial government has been taking strides to address water issues.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I live in the unincorporated community of Green Island Cove. There are no public water supplies,

despite there being pipes in the ground from before my time of a failed project offered by the provincial government in years gone by. I guess back pre-1980s or early 1980s there were failed plans as well.

Needless to say, all residents in Green Island Cove, like many other communities, are responsible for their own private water supplies. In my case, multiple wells had to be drilled, resulting in either too much salt, magnesium, lead or other minerals, and high concentrates. At this point, in a private household we have to spend dollars, and have spent them, on purification systems, water softeners, and filtration systems.

Water and providing safe and clean drinking water is a very complex issue. What we have had to do is purchase water like many other residents, whether they are in incorporated or unincorporated communities, water from the local co-operative in these sanitized water drinking stations, generally in 18.9 litres. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, this is really not the solution for providing safe and clean drinking water to our communities and really providing long-term health for our residents to make sure that that is protected.

The Minister of Health has said on numerous occasions that the state of our health care spending is really unsustainable. We spend more per capita than anywhere else in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are seeing where programs in the health care system are being cut. Clean and safe drinking water really needs to come from the taps to our homes, and preventive care is one of those ways of providing the basics to assist in that and help reduce the cost and the burden on our health care system.

We need to really move from a voluntary testing program in these private wells to looking at moving towards a more regular testing program so that we know, because knowing is important. People have the right to know. The Province should be obligated in making sure we have the best information available in these situations as

well, because it can lead to a better and healthier population.

Drinking water is really essential to human health and well-being. In many circumstances large urban public drinking water generally poses a non real health risk to consumers. We have seen, though, in some cases, even in the larger water supplies, that they have been compromised in the past. The City of St. John's, in December 2009, experienced a malfunction at their treatment plant, but a very short, temporary twenty-four-hour boil advisory was instituted.

These disruptions, Mr. Speaker, can be quite inconvenient, but typically they can be fixed very quickly in these large urban centres, like St. John's, Mount Pearl, and Corner Brook, because these areas have the financial and technical resources that are available to produce excellent and high-quality drinking water for the people they serve.

Boil advisories, really, are intended to be emergency measures, as we see in these larger areas, to protect consumers from imminent but really temporary threats to drinking water safety. Long-term continuing advisories, regardless of their underlying rationale, are a frank admission that these affected systems are otherwise failing to assure safe drinking water.

We saw, Mr. Speaker, with elevated levels of THMs in Pouch Cove and Bonavista that long-term exposure can really hinder and cause health risks over the long term because they have such high elevated levels. We have to look at that the Minister of Environment and Conservation has said it can take a lifetime of exposure to THMs to make a significant difference to a person's health. Well, if we really look at safe drinking water, it is defined by the guidelines of not representing any significant health risk over the lifetime of consumption, including different sensitivities that occur over the life stages. That is significant.

Mr. Speaker, people are living in these rural communities that are having these impacts for a lifetime. In my very own district, a total of thirteen of the twenty-one public water supplies

are on boil water advisory. Some communities have two. As well, there are two local service districts that have been on boil advisories since 1997. That is quite long term. That is in excess of fifteen years. There are towns that are on a boil advisory for more than a decade.

They are not alone, though, Mr. Speaker. Communities on the North Coast of Labrador, in meetings with the Combined Councils of Labrador, expressed concerns. We look at some of the solutions that are being provided, like potable water distribution units to look at trying to help. We do need to look at potential solutions that are there, and I hope to get to talk about that and those who will participate in this debate.

As of March 2013, there are 233 boil water advisories affecting 168 communities. According to the latest drinking water safety annual report that has been made public – May 2011 – there are 250 boil water advisories affecting 164 communities, affecting 40,000 people.

Only seventeen of those, Mr. Speaker, were due to unsafe water tests. The other 198 were documented failures, caused by the inability to operate water systems effectively; forty-two, no disinfection system; twenty-three, system turned off; forty, system broken; seventeen, operational problems; and seventy-three, chlorination not reaching the whole system. So, there are distribution problems.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at some of the systemic problems that are chronic to many of the small rural municipalities and local service districts and how can we address that. The regulation of drinking water is guided and managed through a series of departments, so not one person has responsibility. Highlighted in previous reports: Service Newfoundland and Labrador, Environment and Conservation, Health and Community Services, Municipal Affairs, and managed by municipalities and local service districts, and even those individuals who are responsible for their own water supplies.

Mr. Speaker, it is evident that there is a disconnect sometimes, a fragmented, almost a very much ad hoc manner that leaves us vulnerable to future water failures, most likely in smaller systems; and we see where small municipalities, typically less than 500 people, are the most vulnerable to the boil water advisory.

These are concerns. These are evident concerns, Mr. Speaker. It is evident, though – and I am not saying this – that there are some initiatives and progress happening under the current Administration. We see that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has talked, on several occasions, of the commitment to the Province to improve water quality in its municipalities. He has talked several times about a regional approach and regionalization, and I commend that to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

I have seen in my district approvals for new water systems, and they continue to work through the process. I hope that, like many others, they will be removed from boil water advisory.

We look at the plan that government has had with the Multi-Barrier Strategic Action Plan in 2000 and Rural Drinking Water Safety Initiative of 2008. There have been things where monitoring has been improved and watersheds have been protected, but the system still has problems.

I firmly believe that we need a system that better promotes and rewards those providing safe and clean drinking water. We need to ensure that smaller municipalities are afforded the training, support and compensation that match their responsibilities through their actions or their inactions for the health of an entire community.

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador had the following quote: “Co-operatively tackling the problems in the system should be the main focus; blaming the volunteers is not the answer.” That is in response to a comment from a former Minister of Environment and Conservation based on commentary in a Budget’s Estimates of 2011.

Mr. Speaker, the MHA for St. John's East and I held a meeting of regionalization in The Straits involving the communities of Eddies Cove East to Anchor Point. The Department of Municipal Affairs was invited to be part of this process. A total of sixty people attended the meeting, reflecting a need to advance public drinking water supplies to these unorganized communities and organized communities. There were wells tested that showed results of E. coli, others showing and sharing their experience of discolouration and rust, while some had undrinkable water due to high salt content.

The area has only two municipalities and three Local Service Districts, meaning eight communities are not receiving public water supplies. However, back in the day there were incorporation papers for Sandy Cove and Savage Cove with a promise of community water supply from a nearby pond. Sadly, that never materialized.

Concurrently, though, provincial drinking water policies should encourage, where conditions allow, effective means and consolidations of smaller systems into larger, more viable operations. Maybe we need to consider regional water authorities.

When I lived in England, it was quite clear they have consolidated their smaller communities and are being served by regional water authorities. Therefore, not every town needs a trained person to maintain water systems; they can be shared. This is a step that requires further study, but could be part of the solution to help deal with our vast geography and small rural communities. A common-sense approach, good planning for the long term, and looking at advancing a new clean drinking water strategy is where we need to go to improve, to ensure that our residents are better looked after than they are today.

I will in my closing address some of the solutions and other suggestions. I encourage the debate. I look forward to the dialogue, because this is an important issue for all people of Newfoundland and Labrador, no matter where you represent or which party you stand for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Member for The Straits – White Bay North and the Member for St. John's East for putting forward this private member's bill, because it gives me an opportunity to reflect on exactly what we are doing as an Administration and how we are tackling some of the issues facing municipalities and the people in this Province, particularly what our strategy is around addressing these issues.

I want to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker: this Administration's primary objective is about the safety of our citizens, particularly around safety in the water that they consume. We do not compromise that by any stretch.

I just want to look at some of the things that have been noted here. I give credit; the member has noted sometimes when he criticizes us, then he will jump back and compliment us for the investments we have made and he will also talk about things that we are doing well. Then, times he will talk about the fact that we have a very vast Province here and it is hard to invest in every part of it and it is hard to make sure that all the needs are met, but he does realize that we have taken major steps forward to improve what we do in this Province for the citizens, particularly around water safety.

I just want to go to part of his resolution here: "Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly urge the government to consider the following measures as part of a Newfoundland and Labrador Safe Drinking Water Strategy".

Mr. Speaker, we have had a safe drinking water strategy in place for over a decade here now. I give credit; it started with the Liberal Administration in 2001 as a result of Walkerton

– credit to our learned colleagues over there who took the lead on that. They took the lead and started it, and as a result it came to us, but taking the lead does not mean anything. There is a difference between taking the lead and showing leadership. We showed leadership. We have taken it and moved it to the next step. The next step is engaging the people, engaging municipalities, engaging the federal government, and engaging the authorities in the various parts of the Province, trying to look at developers, how we make sure water safety is a primary objective, and how we work in ways of training and these types of initiatives.

I just want to talk about some of the things outlined by the member's presentation: "a comprehensive, ongoing public education program in plain language to inform the public about...". Plain language, Mr. Speaker, is how we talk in this Administration, how we have engaged people, how we talk about our transparency, and how we have made it easier for people to be able to consult with us. That is our main objective, and even the media will give us credit for how we do that and do it very effectively.

The risk of using roadside springs and ponds – well, Mr. Speaker, we have to be honest and up front - we do not encourage people to do that. The safety risks are too high. We tell people that is not in the best interests of the people who are going to have to consume water.

What we do say, and we do offer a process here, if you want to come in and have that spring or roadside ponds tested, we will do that free of charge. Another one of the many services that this Administration offers free of charge to our citizens, because we want to make sure their safety is our primary objective. Now, we still do not encourage it, because as the flow of water and rain and runoff and everything else changes, so does the potential risks that are in that water supply, but we give people the opportunity there. We give them that resource at their fingertips at no cost.

Mr. Speaker, that is another benefit that people have taken very high advantage of. We are

happy to be able to say, hopefully, we have saved people from getting any health risks and now have a better understanding of what water is safe for them to drink.

The need for regular testing of private wells; again, that is another one of those free services we offer. People will come on in, and we will test it to make sure it is as safe as possible for the individuals. We have perhaps the most stringent regulations when it comes to drilling wells and dealing with the companies that are tasked with that, to make sure that the best potential flow of clean water is available for those citizens.

The distinction between safe and unsafe water and how to reduce exposure to THMs; well, Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned by the member over there, there is a reason why we have boil advisories, because again today we want to put minimal risk to anybody who is using it. We have not had a boil order during this Administration because we have taken every risk possible. We have invested in our infrastructure, we have trained people, and we have partnered with the municipalities, we have partnered with the contractors, we have partnered with the general public to make sure they are aware of the risks that may be in the water they consume.

So, we have been doing all this, and doing all that. It is a public knowledge. We have a Web site, a water safety portal that anybody can go in at any given time and get an understanding in plain English as to exactly what it is we are offering. What exactly are the risks out there, how it is being assessed, who can take advantage of it, and any resources they may need that we have at our disposal is at their disposal also.

We will partner with them. We will make sure those resources are out there to identify any gaps in the potential safety issues around water that they may have, including reasons for advisories, safe use of water, and proper boiling procedures. We do that. We are the ones who put it out there. We put out flyers. We put out brochures. We put out signs.

We go to municipalities and encourage them. We do training with the Federation of Municipalities. We offer training for staff in municipalities. We offer it for local areas. We work very closely, particularly the Department of Environment, very closely with developers on making sure when they are drilling for water that everything meets with the specifications and the regulations we have as part of our operating policies.

A review of capital and operating grants to enable communities to obtain trained staff and equipment to build, operate and maintain drinking water facilities. Mr. Speaker, we have just been acknowledged there by the Member for The Straits – White Bay North. We have invested more than anybody. We have invested \$160 million between the three levels in the last five years to guarantee safety is there for the people we serve.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, that is just the initial part of how our strategy is working for the safety of people in this Province.

Again, as I mentioned earlier, the focus of the government on drinking water safety in Newfoundland and Labrador is second to none. We work co-operatively with municipalities throughout the Province to provide education, training, and support in our efforts to deliver clean and safe drinking water to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is our primary objective, and we have been very successful at doing that.

Drinking water infrastructure is a major investment for the communities throughout our Province. Operations and maintenance of these systems is often difficult for smaller communities because of fiscal restraints. I know we are criticized here because of the fiscal restraints that have been imposed at certain times, but this Administration, through the Minister of Municipal Affairs, has invested more money than any other Administration in the past.

Only recently, we have added to the operating grants of all municipalities and we put no restrictions on how they use that money, Mr. Speaker. They have the ability to take that and put it into what they may see as one of their primary focus areas. I would hope in most cases water safety would be one of those, to maintain the systems they have in place.

We are proud of the work that we do on a daily basis to work with our towns and communities to protect, enhance, conserve, develop, control, and effectively utilize the water resources of our Province. We have done that. We continue to do that. We engage all the other line departments to make sure the resources are available to our municipalities.

In 2012, there were 514 public water distribution systems in Newfoundland and Labrador serving a population of 407,000 people. Of these systems, 70 per cent are classified as very small, serving a population of 500 people or less. So you understand the challenge we have in being able to maintain the system there, upgrade a system, and put all the infrastructure in place, multiple challenges that we have in this Province, Mr. Speaker. That is noted by a lot of the other services we try to provide with people, be it education, health care, or road infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, we make sure this is one of the important items here because of the safety for the people in this Province.

Our Multi-Barrier Strategic Action Plan approaches includes: source protection, adequate and affordable water treatment, water distribution system operations and maintenance, drinking water quality monitoring and reporting, operator education and training, and research and policy development. We want to make sure the people who are at the front end in the municipalities have the training to be able to go out and assess exactly what may be a risk to the people who are in their areas.

The Department of Environment, assisted by the Departments of Municipal Affairs, Health and Community Services, and Service NL, as well as various federal departments, regional health boards, and municipalities, participated in the

implementation of this action plan. We have developed a partnership because we see the benefits of having all the stakeholders engaged, knowing that we can better use the resources that are available to benefit the people of this Province. That is what we do, and we do it very effectively. In this case it has been a benefit to the people we serve.

We are making substantial gains. I do not mind saying, Mr. Speaker, that on a national basis, we are considered one of the leading provinces when it comes to our commitment to safe drinking water for our residents. In fact – and I want the member there from the NDP to note this, because I guess he is very aware of this organization – Ecojustice, a national organization dedicated to defending Canadians' rights to a healthy environment, gave our Province a B grading in 2011 for our efforts to help ensure safe, clean drinking water for the people of our Province.

If you look at it, going back to 2001, we have been upgraded from a D level to a B level. That is a testament to the investment we have had there. Are we stopping at a B level? No; for this Administration, through our leadership here, it is all about: how do we get to the best level of safe drinking water for the people who we serve? Mr. Speaker, that is what we continue to do. That is what the Minister of Environment and Conservation, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and all the other line ministers who are engaged in this process want to make sure happens. It is why we invest; it is why Cabinet invests the money here to make sure the services for the people are adequate and are safe.

This speaks to an incredible amount of work that has been done in this area since we introduced our multi-barrier approach to drinking water safety in 2001. We have increased that from a D level, Mr. Speaker, as I said, to a B grading right now. The results of this report indicate that drinking water safety in Newfoundland and Labrador has been on an improving trajectory. The improvement is due to the hard work of all stakeholders working together.

We can only engage the municipalities, equip them, give them the proper training, and try to engage other ways that they can leverage funds and services to make sure that the clean drinking water is put in the proper manner so that it can be availed of by all people in this Province. In our Province, more than 90 per cent of the people who use water are now receiving it from a protected source, a testament, too, to what we have done.

We understand that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to water in our Province. It is why we continue to work with our municipalities to develop approaches based on their individual needs. We sit down with these individuals and determine: where is our best investment and where is it that they want us to emphasize how we do things?

We have been criticized over the last period of time for not investing in rural Newfoundland. I just want to tell you about the potable water dispensing units that we have installed in the various communities. I just want to read out a list of ones that are now in operation in various areas: St. Lawrence, Buchans, Howley, Black Tickle, Burnt Island, Gaultois, and Ramea; under construction or commissioned: Whiteway, Point May, Leading Ticks, Mary's Harbour, Postville, Rigolet, Isle aux Morts, Lawn, Seal Cove, Makkovik, and Port Saunders, just to name a few, and others in the works. People cannot say we are not committed to rural Newfoundland and Labrador; that is an example there of what we are trying to do and improve for the people in this Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate: what we have taken here to lead since 2001 is to improve the infrastructure when it comes to water safety. While the resolution has some merits and we applaud the member for that, there is no doubt that we would support the components of that, because we have been doing it; we have been living it. The rest of the world has been watching how we do it. We have been getting people from the United States; universities down there want to look at how we

have been testing it. We are getting it from Walkerton themselves, who have come to us and said: we want to be engaged in how you guys have gotten to your regulatory process, how you have engaged the training, and how you put the system in place so that the people would know what is safe and what is unsafe. We have managed to do that very effectively.

Mr. Speaker, with that being said, while I support the resolution put forward, I would like to propose an amendment. Mr. Speaker, it reads as follows: the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, that the private member's resolution now before the House of Assembly be amended by replacing the words, "address the issues of safe drinking water in the Province by developing a new Newfoundland and Labrador Safe Drinking Water Strategy that will include, but not be limited to:", with the words, consider the follow measures as part of the Newfoundland and Labrador Safe Drinking Water Strategy.

Seconded by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape la Hune.

I want to propose that as an amendment to the resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity, and I want to propose that to the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We have an amendment proposed by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. We will distribute that amendment to people and we will take a brief recess to consider whether the amendment is in order.

### Recess

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We have considered the amendment put forward by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, and have considered the amendment to be in order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While I have a minute left, I just want to touch on a few other things to show how we have been moving our strategy forward. During 2011, Mr. Speaker, we also initiated a study into public drinking water systems supplied by groundwater that is suspected to be under the direct influence of surface water. That is another way we wanted to make sure we had all the information necessary so that our strategy could include any other approaches that we needed to address that issue.

These various initiatives are further proof of our ongoing commitment to clean and safe drinking water in Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition to the numerous studies, we also support the use of emerging tools and technology for the monitoring of water quality. Near Real-Time Water Quality Monitoring Programs can be used to indicate the presence of chemical contaminants and can provide an early warning of potential threats to water supplies and human health.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed. Our water resources experts, as well as the technology developed right here in Newfoundland and Labrador, has gained attention on a worldwide stage. In fact, our expertise has been utilized in Egypt, the Kingdom of Jordan, and Russia. Mr. Speaker, again, that is a testament to the work being done by the professionals in this Province.

I want to thank everybody for listening to my words.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for St. Barbe.

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

Mr. Speaker, the issue of clean, safe drinking water, you cannot have a lot of issues more critical and more important than clean, safe drinking water. Maybe health, maybe fire protection, maybe police protection, maybe sanitation, but clean drinking water must be one of the most critical issues that a government can deal with and one of the most important issues, and we are not making the grade in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to try to determine exactly how many boil orders are in existence in the Province, because the number keeps changing. I could not quite fathom why it would be up one day and down the next day. In fact, that is accurate.

Through the efforts of one of our researchers, the number that I have that was produced by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador up to 7:00 last evening was 229. I thought it would be useful to see which towns have boil orders, which towns do not have boil orders. Then because the government is so fond of blaming the government before and saying: Well, when we took over, there was nothing for us to work with, the Province was almost bankrupt, and everything was in terrible shape. Look at the great job we have done.

I thought that maybe I should look and try to determine where these boil orders are, how old these boil orders are, and how long the boil orders have been around. So I started to review – and if any members want it, I am more than happy to table this document when I finish, although it simply is the government's boil water advisory.

I thought I should go through the list of boil orders – and some of them have been outstanding for a long, long time, an unbelievable length of time. Some of the reasons are sort of astounding, I guess. If you look at one on the first page of this list of twenty-nine, it says: chlorination system turned off by operator due to lack of funds to operate. You look at the length of time, it says: June 1,

1995. You look at it and say: Well, where is that? It is in Baine Harbour.

So, you have to wonder: Do they have a minister? Do they have a member? How can a place like Baine Harbour have a boil order in place, according to the government numbers, for the last eighteen years because they do not have enough money to pay for operating a chlorination system?

If you look at others, if you look and see Churchill Falls – why would Churchill Falls have a boil order? Churchill Falls is a company town. Churchill Falls has two boil orders. One from October 14, 2008 and another from June 8, 2010, and it is still in effect. A town that contributes so much in revenue to this Province, yet it has two boil orders – one has been outstanding for four years and another one for nearly three years.

Continuing to look at them, if you look at one in Lawn – speaking to the amendment and also speaking to the motion, I see that the people from Lawn get their water from a place called Brazil Pond. Brazil Pond has total coliforms detected and confirmed in repeated samples. So, Brazil Pond in Lawn that serves 705 people has had a boil order since last August, and they cannot seem to get the water safe to drink.

Then I look at other towns and I see Piccadilly-Abrahams Cove: 414 people and 364 people. They have had a boil order since September 28, 2010; system turned off by operator due to lack of funds to operate.

Mr. Speaker, this seems to go to a very deep matter, a deep issue of mismanagement of the Province's resources. How could we possibly have these towns, in such good times, with boil orders for such basic reasons as they cannot afford to run it? They have a system and they just cannot afford to chlorine it? That makes absolutely no sense. To me, it is a complete indictment of how this Province has performed or has not performed under this government for the last nine years.

So I thought, let's see how many of these problems they inherited. Let's see how many of these problems they let happen. Let's see if it was necessary that we should have over 200 boil orders. I think not. I think we should have at worst only a handful of boil orders, and that should maybe be due to repairs which you see in some of these.

In going over the entire list, I thought: well, let's take them at their word that there was no money in 2003. Give them a pass for 2003. Let's also give them a pass in 2004 saying they really did not have things in order. If the taxpayers expected nothing in water and sewer from 2004, well, let's go another year and let them have 2005 where they put nothing into water and sewer. Let's start in 2006, because we all know that the gravy train got well underway in 2006. There have been barrels of money in this Province since 2006.

How many new boil orders do we have? How many boil orders in this Province started in 2006 and forward and still exist? Mr. Speaker, 113 boil orders in this Province while this government has been absolutely flush with cash. Not the first year they took over, not the second year they took over, but starting in the third year they took over we have 113 boil orders in eighty-five months. That is an average of 1.3 new boil orders a month since this government has had more money than they could count. I think that is absolutely disgraceful. It is completely shameful that our water should be in this system.

Let's say instead that this government had been a little bit more proactive. Let's say they did not allow any more boil orders. They were attentive enough that they were minding the shop and they were looking after the Province. Instead of making political announcements, grandiose schemes, big plans and doing things like announcing hospitals time and time again, making offshore announcements and getting into contentious fights with the federal government, let's say they actually looked after the Province.

Let's say they looked after the people who elected them with the money that came in non-

renewable resources from this Province. If we had no new boil orders after 2006 because the government had gotten things together, then we would have had 116 boil orders outstanding. If the government then paid serious attention to boil orders – many of these boil orders appear to be simply in place because there are mechanical problems, there are chlorination problems, or there are problems that are relatively minor and systems are already in place.

This government is so bent on making big announcements, announcing infrastructure and waving a flag about what a great job they are doing, when in fact they are not. We have, as of 7:00 o'clock last night, 229 boil orders, 116 of which they inherited and 113 which they created. That is completely unacceptable. I do not see why the people of this Province should accept this type of a result. If you look at simply no chlorine in the water, the disinfection system turned off due to maintenance or mechanical problems. This report is literally riddled with these types of problems.

The minister in Question Period responded to what happened in Walkerton. I am familiar with Walkerton. Walkerton was a situation where seven people died because of water with E.coli in it. The E.coli in the Walkerton water came because of farming activity. In the wintertime, with hog farms they distribute all of the manure over the land. When the spring thaw came, it came into the water system. It was not being adequately checked by a couple of brothers named Koebel, who simply got themselves into trouble. They were not paying attention. They were not looking after the water.

Water is such a precious resource. It is such a high responsibility that it is absolutely critical to take care of water supplies. This government cannot possibly say they are taking care of water supplies when they have had 113 new boil orders that are still in existence, that are still in place today, that came not on their watch – there was more than that on their watch, but this is giving them the benefit of the doubt of the last few months of 2003, all of 2004, all of 2005, starting in 2006. That is how many new boil orders there are.

What they have done with the money they say they have invested in water and sewer simply escapes me. By way of example, this is completely unnecessary. Many of these small communities, with a minimal amount of attention from the provincial government, the water supply could be much better.

I live in a region with a handful of small communities. They run from Daniel's Harbour, Portland Creek, Bellburns, Parsons Pond, Cow Head and St. Paul's. They employ one water technician. The guy checks on everybody's water on a regular basis. He has won very distinctive awards. He is someone who really should be recognized.

When I look through this list, I see only one of those communities on a boil order. That boil order is five days old. That boil order in those six communities is only from five days ago, from March 15, and that is because it is down for repairs. That is the way it could be and that is the way it should be, but government needs to pay much more attention to the quality of our drinking water, because we do have good water in this Province by and large.

Where we have more issues with water, if the water is being properly chlorinated, is with THMs. As an engineer explained to me on one occasion, the THMs come because of the residue that you find in water; when you chlorinate the water in order to kill bacteria that is harmful, you are left with quite a bit of residue. In some cases it may be unavoidable; if you chlorinate, you will have THMs, unless you go in to pipe water from much further away.

Many of these communities have water systems that could be much better; they would not need so much chlorine and they would not have THMs. We know in this Province the health risks that we have in a whole range of diseases, and we wonder: why is the rate of stomach cancer so high in this Province? Why is the rate of bowel cancer so high in this Province? Why is the rate of all types of cancers of people's internal organs so high? Is it possible that it is because of our water supply? Is it possible because of the THMs? Is it possible, not

necessarily because of diet, not necessarily because of other lifestyle choices, but if our water is as good as everybody else's – and we see no evidence that it is not – and our water is not improving. Our water has not improved under this government; in fact, we have 113 boil orders that have been in existence since 2006, at a rate of 1.3 new boil orders per month for the last eighty-five months. That is completely unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, while I would have no problem supporting the resolution, I certainly could not support the amendment. I think that the amendment is done just to effectively gut the resolution to try to put the government in good light when in fact, they have failing grades in clean water, clean and safe water in this Province, and they deserve those failing grades by their own statistics collected by employees of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Honourable colleagues, I certainly appreciate having the opportunity to speak to the amendment to this motion; a very important amendment to the motion, I would say.

Clean and safe drinking water is a top priority for this government and a key area for which we provide support to our municipalities across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This government in particular, the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment and Conservation work closely together with our municipalities across Newfoundland and Labrador on a variety of initiatives to provide clean and safe drinking water.

Earlier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs mentioned: since 2008, \$630 million to municipalities, mostly related to water improvements in the communities in

Newfoundland and Labrador. That is certainly a substantial amount of funding coming from that particular department and going out to municipalities all over this particular Province.

In fact, since 2008 this government has committed over \$50 million for seventy-two water treatment projects in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How many?

**MR. LITTLE:** Seventy-two water treatment plants.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLE:** A total of \$50 million since 2008, and that number is significant as well, Mr. Speaker. When you include investments by municipalities and the federal government, over \$114 million has been committed to these projects in total – \$114 million, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLE:** What a substantial investment.

Projects related to drinking water are given top priority under our Capital Works programs and we work closely with communities to determine the best approach to the provision of clean water in their communities, Mr. Speaker.

Towns such as Gander and Clarenville, in conjunction with the Department of Municipal Affairs and this provincial government, have implemented the optimal solution for safe drinking water by investing in water treatment facilities. Those ventures are quite costly, and me, coming from a community council in the Town of Bonavista, I do know how important clean drinking water is.

I have been on council for fourteen years in the Town of Bonavista. In some instances, communities, based on population and size, cannot afford some of those treatment facility plants. Under regional programs there is the possibility that communities can regionalize, co-operate with Municipal Affairs, and through

different community leadership groups look at the possibility of including water treatment facilities in the future. This government is certainly open-minded to that, and we will definitely work with other municipalities throughout the Province of Newfoundland Labrador.

Like I said, unfortunately not every community can afford this option because of lower population numbers and they may therefore look at other options in relation to water treatment plants. Currently, the community council of the Town of Bonavista, also in conjunction with Municipal Affairs, is undertaking a three-phase water main system. It is going to take possibly three years to complete this new water system from water reservoir in the Town of Bonavista.

The Town of Bonavista has received a total of \$1 million from Municipal Affairs in relation to phase I. That is substantial for the community and the Town of Bonavista. Also, through Municipal Affairs and Municipal Operating Grants and so forth, the Town of Bonavista is in the process of refurbishing what we call the water tank locally – the water tower – which is a water reservoir. The total cost of that project is actually over \$500,000. That commitment was made recently, and that project will be ongoing as well in the municipality of the Town of Bonavista. I am certainly having a number of discussions with delegates from the municipal council in the Town of Bonavista in relation to this particular issue.

As part of the work this government undertakes, the Department of Environment and Conservation works closely with municipalities to monitor source and tap water quality on a regular basis. The information collected is used to ensure, in this Province, we are in compliance with the guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality. If we do see quality issues, then steps are taken to determine the best path forward.

This is very important, Mr. Speaker. Part of this monitoring and testing of water – which is conducted by Service Newfoundland and Labrador and the Department of Health and Community Services – environmental health

officials assist with sample taking in communities across this Province and will work with those communities to ensure that chlorination and other levels are where they should be, Mr. Speaker. That is very important as well.

When issues arise, these environmental health officials will put a boil water advisory in place until such time as several subsequent clean samples of water are obtained. This is very important. These are guidelines that are followed throughout the Province and throughout the country as well.

While many of our larger municipalities have pipe services, there are a number of excellent technologies out there in the market which can be considered for water treatment. This government fully endorses these technologies, Mr. Speaker, and has indeed begun an effort to put some of them in place. In 2008, the provincial government commenced a process to develop a comprehensive overview of water quality issues.

One result of this work was potable water dispensing units were identified as a way to provide high-quality drinking water to small communities in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in particular the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. Potable water dispensing units are small-scale water treatment systems, which pump and treat water from the municipal supply, store the treated water, and allow residents to manually collect the water from a small shelter.

Prior to 2011, seven communities in Newfoundland and Labrador have operated these units. In addition, in August 2011, the department announced additional potable water dispensing units for communities across the Province and since 2011 have commissioned another six units.

Drinking water units are operational in six communities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador right now. Construction is ongoing at five other communities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador right now, Mr. Speaker. Other

communities in the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador are in the early stages of implementation. They are in communities also in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Clean drinking water is very important to us all. As a councillor, I certainly thought it was a top priority in my municipality in the District of Bonavista South. This government of the day takes this issue very seriously. Boil water advisories are preventative measures for protecting public health from water-borne microbiological contamination that may or are known to be present in drinking water.

Boil water advisories in this Province are, for the most part, issued as a precautionary measure to ensure consumers safety. That is very important. Generally, these relate to the lack of chlorine and not poor water quality.

There have been no water-borne disease outbreaks reported in this Province. The highest percentage of boil water advisories exist due to the water supply not having a disinfectant system or no free chlorine, residue detected in the water distribution system. Long-term boil water advisories, greater than five years in duration, tend to exist for the same reasons, Mr. Speaker.

About 205, or 92.76 per cent of the current boil water advisories are for non-microbiological reasons such as: no disinfectant systems, forty-three; systems turned off, twenty-one; systems broken, thirty-seven; operational problems, twenty-six; residual chlorine problems, seventy-seven, and other reasons one. Only sixteen, or 7.24 per cent, of the total boil water advisories are due to microbiological reasons.

This government of the day is very transparent in relation to what information we put out there to the general public. There is nothing hidden. We are working with two departments, one in our own provincial government, to make sure we provide the best possible drinking water that an individual can consume. We have a record that is a stellar record, in relation to what is happening in other provinces, in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

Newfoundland and Labrador is not the only provincial government in the country to undertake monitoring of public drinking water systems on behalf of the communities. The provincial government is working co-operatively with municipalities throughout this Province on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker, to provide education, training and support.

I know for a fact, in the municipality of Bonavista we do have technicians on staff who actually attend educational training, support programs, in relation to travelling to the Town of Gander on an annual basis where there is a conference put off by Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and in conjunction with Municipal Affairs officials, and so forth. There is no doubt that this government is working co-operatively with municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Drinking water infrastructure is a major investment for communities throughout this Province. Proper operation and maintenance of these systems are often difficult for many smaller communities because of fiscal realities. This government is certainly highlighting the issues, working with all communities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It is good to see community leaders, along with government officials, are working in a co-operative manner to highlight the importance and continued importance of water quality in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Department of Environment and Conservation, along with the Department of Municipal Affairs, offer annual, I say annual clean and safe drinking water workshops. The workshops provide municipal drinking water operators with the opportunity to come together, people throughout the Province, to increase their knowledge of drinking water safety. We are proactive. There is no doubt that this government is proactive and takes this issue very seriously.

I would also like to say the conference that occurs in Gander, there are no registration fees. That is almost unheard of. I would say probably

this is the only Province in the country or in the world –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** With three hundred delegates.

**MR. LITTLE:** Three hundred-plus delegates every year, the interest is there –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Subsidized by Municipal Affairs.

**MR. LITTLE:** Subsidized by Municipal Affairs as well, and the highest pass rate in the country, Mr. Speaker. There is some positive resource information coming out from this educational training. There is a certificate program as well that is very beneficial.

The people who I talked to in the District of Bonavista South certainly take this issue seriously. They will continue to definitely take into consideration the importance of training like this. This type of education style is very important, and is going to help out all communities in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

It is a pleasure to get up and talk about something as universal as water. Sometimes we can reach a pretty easy agreement on where we are going with water. In some cases we can have a lot of debate, but in the end I think everybody is in agreement here that no doubt, it is a necessity of life.

I have to make note as well that March 22 is probably an important day for people who work hard in the environment and who worry about our water. It is World Water Day on March 22, and 2013 is the International Year of Water Co-

operation, as declared by the United Nations. That is probably part of the reason why we wanted to talk about water today; it is that we have two prestigious dates in Newfoundland and Labrador to celebrate: to celebrate, number one, good water; and, number two, in the spirit of that, to be able to sit and stand in our places and talk about the importance of water, what we are doing for it, and what we are doing for people about the safety and security of water supply. March 22: Happy Water Day, on that particular note.

Mr. Speaker, when I started my research for this particular end of the debate, one of the things I found upon that research, in talking about the United Nations Convention and the right to clean water and sanitation – which was, I think, first talked about in the United Nations in 2010; there was some discussion as to whether Canada would sign or not onto that agreement.

It is disturbing to know that the federal government of this country still has not signed on; they still fail to sign the UN declaration with regard to the right to clean water and sanitation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Speaker, that is almost unbelievable, that we have a federal government that can ignore water such as they have. It makes you wonder about their priorities as regards to where they are going to be going in this particular budget when it comes to infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. We hope that if they are going to be coming out with an infrastructure budget, Newfoundland and Labrador is going to be able to capture some of that, capture some of that funding that they are talking about in this budget this particular time around, and that our own provincial government is going to be able to redirect some of those funds directly into water and water management in this Province and deflect some of that water back in municipalities, so that we can finally get the job done as regards to making advances in cleaning up our water systems in the Province.

On that particular note, you have to ask if you believe that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have the right to clean drinking water and sanitation, too. It is not only a UN declaration. What we need to hear at the same time is that the Province is going to make their own declaration, if you will, that they are going to proceed forthwith and get some of these problems with our water systems cleaned up. I certainly think that government could do more and I think that is part of the reason we came out with our resolution today for discussion amongst all members.

I want to talk a little bit about the whole problem of THMs in water. It is not only THMs that we are studying on the part of the provincial government in the Environment Department and Municipal Affairs. It also has to do with HAAs, or haloacetic acids, that are also in water. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, haloacetic acids are more dangerous than THMs, and we still have a problem with haloacetic acids in our water supply, too. We cannot lose focus on haloacetics at the same time as we are talking about THMs.

I wanted to come out and talk about some of the numbers in the latest study from Environment. This one, of course, was published on August 17, 2012, available on the department's Web site. Some of the towns where they had elevated levels were a little bit disconcerting. For example, Avondale has a level of 217.25 parts per billion THMs. I wanted to bring up these towns for another particular reason that I will get to in just a second.

We go to Centreville-Wareham-Trinity, for example, where their levels are upwards of 261 parts per billion. We can go to the Town of Burlington; the numbers there are ranging 501.75 parts per billion of THMs in the water supply. We can go to the Town of Brighton: 313 parts per billion. Some of these communities have been around in existence for a long time and probably have aging infrastructure and are probably having problems with having to get their infrastructure updated.

Go to the Town of Cottlesville, for example: 247 parts per billion in their water supply. The list is endless. It goes on. There are a couple of Labrador examples I had marked off here. You go into Mary's Harbour: 171 parts per billion. You go to Pouch Cove – of course, it is the media example I think they used a couple of weeks ago: 339.25 parts per billion. Port Hope Simpson in Labrador: 308 parts per billion.

We go on; Sunnyside, for example, Trinity: 321. St. George's, which was an interesting one to me, showed 409 parts per billion; that was in their Dribble Brook, which is the backup supply to the Town of St. George's out there on the Port au Port Peninsula. Why did I use that example of 409 parts per billion, which readily stood out to me? It is because this is one area of the Province that is probably under the threat of an advent in technology, and that would be fracking. Now, Dribble Brook is not far away from where two wells were drilled already, and fracked; it is probably a couple of hundred metres away, to my guessing, when I was looking at the map for the project.

Again, we are talking about the threat to municipal water supplies with the potential, Mr. Speaker, of doing damage to somebody's right to clean water. We have to ask ourselves: if we do not have proper regulations in place when it comes to fracking and when it comes to the dumping of wastewater after the process is done – they are talking about injecting it deep into the ground; they are saying that it is not a problem.

Some people believe out there that it is not a problem because the water is going to be deep down, it is going to be well under the aquifer, and nothing is going to happen. Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth, to quote somebody else's line from years ago, because what happens is that some of these things migrate. We already know about the migration of oil from deep underground up around the Parson's Pond area. We know why Nalcor went up and decided to drill, because they thought there were going to be untold barrels of oil up there.

At the same time, if you are talking about smacking chemicals deep into the ground just so that you can keep them out of sight and out of mind, Mr. Speaker, you could be talking about anywhere upwards of about 75 million litres of water – poison water, that is – that was used in the drilling process that can migrate up through rock the same as what the oil does in Parsons Pond. There is no way of saying that we cannot issue some sort of assurances when it comes to the environmental protection that some of these areas need, as well as the municipalities and the rights of the people to clean drinking water.

That is why we started asking questions a couple of weeks ago on the fracking issue, and that is why we have a petition out there when it comes to that. Believe you me, those concerns are out there and those concerns are being expressed by people.

To carry on, when it comes to fracking, we also have a problem out there now that is playing out on the West Coast, of a mining company that wants to undertake an exploration project within the watershed area of Corner Brook. Now, that to me is probably about the worst abomination of the reason why you have a watershed in the first place. The watershed area is meant to take whatever rainfall is in that area and directly make it a part of the watershed area, make it a part of that water supply, because it is kind of like a sponge; it soaks up everything and then directs it back to where the main source of water is that you are using it to. That is the reason why we protect these buffers. It is kind of like a buffer; that is really what it is.

To let an oil company or a mining company or whatever get in there and explore in a region that you have necessarily set up for protection – let us face it, you cannot fish there; you cannot go in with your fishing pole in a watershed area. I cannot go up to Windsor Lake right now and throw a line into the water, the same as the Lieutenant-Governor, I believe, might not even have the right to do that. I will have to check on that one.

At the same time, to get into the Corner Brook watershed area and run a drilling program

involving nine holes and twenty-one different drills, I think they are going to be using in there – to allow that to happen with absolutely no waste or no risk to the watershed area itself or the risk to people's water.

Newfoundland and Labrador are pretty good places. If you want to go and explore for mining potential, go somewhere else and do it – go somewhere else and do it, Mr. Speaker. There is plenty of room here in the Province that needs development, too; what is the rush that we need to develop at the risk of losing water? Should we not be taking our time? Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that we should. We have all the time in the world for oil. The oil is not going anywhere if it is still there in the ground.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to redirect then towards the municipal need and to talk a little bit about the frequency testing. At the same time, when I looked at this summary of public water supplies in Newfoundland and Labrador, the THM results, one thing stood out to me that was quite evident; it was the frequency of testing. This is one of the reasons why we came forth with this resolution as well, so that we could see government put more effort into testing and see municipalities be able to avail of that.

For example, I will give you some of the tests I am looking at. Bay St. George South, in the little community of Jeffrey's, that services Jeffrey's; you have the number-one well in Jeffrey's, Joe Curnew well, apparently: zero THMs, Mr. Speaker, in the water, which tells you it is really good water. At the same time, the last test that was done there was in fall of 2006. Mr. Speaker, that is seven years ago. We do not know what has been happening in that area since that could have potentially affected –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Speaker is having difficulty hearing the speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the other side of the House does not want to hear what we are saying over here, but the numbers speak for themselves when it comes to testing.

Let me give you some more numbers here; in Benois Siding there was a hole there that was drilled, a well that was drilled – probably an artesian, I would say, according to this number. The last time it was tested was in winter of 2003. Do the people of Benois Siding want to know how secure their water is right now? I would think that they would love to see a sample of the testing that was done.

I say to the Minister of Environment and Conservation, we can do better than some of these tests that are there, because it is guaranteed that government, no doubt, has a big workload when it comes to the testing of wells. When we are talking about the security of some of these wells, I think it is evident that we have to be doing a little bit more here.

There is more here from Conception Harbour, in his own district. Cemetery Road Well, 8.8 parts per billion. The last time it was tested according to this, the last season sample, the fall of 2001. That is twelve years ago. Again, like I said, the facts here speak for themselves as to the reason why we are looking for government to put in a bigger effort here when it comes to water testing.

Mr. Speaker, I guess in the last couple of minutes what I will do is talk about a couple of other things that I found. Like I said, I just talked about the frequency of testing, the government role in water maintenance and security. I want to talk about the whole idea of government's responsibility sometimes to other people's water supplies.

Just a couple of months ago, Mr. Speaker, I think it was in November, somebody else can

correct me if I am wrong, but we had a breach of a holding pond, a tailings pond from a former mining site that almost ruined the water supply of South Brook. They came very close to borderline panic if you will, when it came to the risk of possibly losing their water supply. At the same time, we have the role of other government departments, too. I think that was the role of Service NL at that particular time when they had to go and do the inspections of these dams and everything.

Mr. Speaker, that brings up another point. We have a government effort looking after the ruination, if you will, the tailings pond, the waste from a major corporation that probably darn well still has the money in their pockets somewhere from scraping the resource out of the earth and leaving a mess behind for us to care take and for the taxpayers to pay for.

What government needs to do is develop a program now, sooner rather than later, for government to recoup these costs off major corporations that are going ahead and possibly ruining our water resources in the future. I see no reason why government cannot do that. We have heavy development right now, Mr. Speaker, up in Labrador and we need to make sure that if one of these mines ever closes up because there is nothing left in the ground that we are going to have some means of cleaning that up. I think that is pretty important to note.

The other thing I will talk about, Mr. Speaker, because I have a lot more to say and I only have about forty-five seconds to say it, is climate change. Some of these THM levels have been escalating for years and it may possibly be because of climate change. I am not saying that is what it is but I think the provincial government needs to throw more money into the ask when it comes to that.

Let me give you an example. Back in 1999 we had sixty-eight towns in this Province with high levels of THMs that would be considered to be unsafe. Today, we are still dealing with 150 to 160 communities with very high levels of THM.

At the same time, myself and the Environment Minister were at a symposium over at the Fluvarium just a few weeks ago. A Dr. Ziegler did an interesting study, talking about the particulate matter that was there in the rivers. Of course, it is particulate matter that is directly linked to (inaudible) –

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Speaker, by leave to clue up, a couple of seconds.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No leave.

**MR. SPEAKER:** No leave.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS PERRY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the House again today and speak to another very important motion here on the floor of the House.

I would like to start, Mr. Speaker, by addressing some of the points that were raised by the hon. Member for St. Barbe and the hon. Member for St. John's East, who just talked a bit about boil orders, the fact that there has been an increase in boil orders, and the dangers and risks of TCM. I want to talk about a little bit of that, Mr. Speaker.

For starters, our government has been recognized not only nationally but internationally by the United Nations as being very proactive in water quality. Our officials have been sought out by the United Nations –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS PERRY:** – to do work around the globe pertaining to water quality. It speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker, for what is happening here in

Newfoundland and Labrador. These experts are on our team each and every day.

We have been very active in research. We are the first country in Canada to launch training programs for councils. Walkerton came to us to learn how to do things and learn how to do the training.

Certainly, we are leading the way in this country. It is because of this training we are doing and it is because of the monitoring we are doing that boil order advisories have increased because we are very much on top of what the water quality is across each and every nook and cranny in this Province.

Mr. Speaker –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Speaker has been very lenient to this point. I ask for order. The Speaker is having trouble hearing the speaker.

Thank you.

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

**MS PERRY:** Thank you.

What are TCMs? TCMs are disinfection by-products. In particular, you are going to find higher concentrations of TCMs in surface water because of the organic compounds, like dead leaves and whatnot. These are things that are going to naturally occur in surface water in particular. Without disinfection, Mr. Speaker, that is when we would have a real challenge.

The health risks that are posed from disinfection by-products, including TCMs, are far less than if we consumed water that has not been properly disinfected. For example, if you look back fifty to a hundred years ago, one of the reasons our life expectancy as a people has improved is because we are treating our water. We are no longer subject to diseases like typhus and

cholera in the same degree because we treat our water.

Look at Walkerton, seven people died – and TCMs, he spoke about the risk of bladder disease. The increase in the risk of bladder cancer is less than one in 100,000 – you did not list that in your statistic – and it based on the lifetime consumption of two litres a day. Again, it far outweighs the risk of instant death or death within a matter of days from typhus or cholera if you are not treating your water. Certainly, it is very, very important to be treating water and it is not something that anyone should discourage.

In terms of the actions that have been taken by this government to address the boil water advisories and TCMs, we will continue to monitor and report the TCM and HAA levels in all disinfected public water supplies so there is very much awareness, accountability and transparency.

Consumers wishing to reduce their exposure, though, to chlorination disinfection do have methods at their disposal to reduce the intake. They can look at things like a filter containing activated carbon certified to the NSF standard, fifty-three per THM removal. That is something we can all do. We can go to Canadian Tire and buy a filter.

Removal of natural organic matter, of course, is the optimum solution to lowering the DBPs in drinking water. Although other options may help, water treatment is the absolute most effective solution. The following options are also commonly recommended corrective measures: you can optimize the chemical dosage for chlorine; practise regular system flushing at dead ends; use alternative disinfectants; consider a water treatment plant; and focus on best management practices based on operation, education and training.

Mr. Speaker, in some of the comments that have come out already today the Member for The Straits – White Bay North talked about the need to have more training for municipalities. Again, I will say to you, Mr. Speaker, we are leading the way across the country. We are the first

again in the country to offer the extent of training that we do. We are the only provincial government in the country to undertake monitoring of public drinking water systems on behalf of communities.

The Department of Environment and Conservation, along with the Department of Municipal Affairs, offers an annual Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop. These workshops provide municipal drinking water operators with the opportunity to come together and increase their knowledge of drinking water safety.

We have an incredible uptake on that. Some of the trainers that we have coming to Newfoundland providing this training are absolutely impressed with the volume of participation that we have here by our municipalities, our administrators, and our employees with respect to learning more about water quality. We continue, Mr. Speaker, to improve in that effort.

Additionally, we have the Operator Education, Training and Certification Program. This program provides the theory that is required to properly operate and maintain a water distribution system. As part of this program, Mr. Speaker, we have mobile training units. These training units go directly to the community to provide drinking water operators with hands-on learning opportunities regarding the operation and maintenance of various water system tools.

As of March 1, 2013, we have, in Newfoundland and Labrador, 328 certified operators working in water systems in 120 communities throughout the Province. There are an additional twenty-four certified water operators who work for non-municipal systems, Mr. Speaker. We are the first jurisdiction in all of North America to be providing this kind of hands-on training. Nothing to sneeze at, Mr. Speaker, and we certainly are making great strides.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, of course, the responsibility for safe drinking water falls under a number of departments. From the point of

view from the Department of Environment and Conservation different activities are undertaken, like the protection of drinking water sources; permits are issued for the safe construction of drinking water infrastructure; source and tap water quality monitoring of chemical and physical parameters; reporting of the drinking water quality data on a quarterly basis to towns and on a regular basis to the Water Resources Portal Web site, which I will talk about a little bit more in a minute; water system operator education; permits to operate the drinking system and so on.

We also have a number of other departments, Mr. Speaker, that are involved. The Department of Municipal Affairs is responsible for the Capital Works Funding for drinking water infrastructure. As my colleagues have outlined here today, seventy-two new systems in the last eight years – quite an accomplishment. Yes, we have more to go and we will get there.

Service Newfoundland and Labrador is responsible for the microbiological monitoring. The Department of Health and Community Services is responsible for any health-related issues concerning drinking water.

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, a boil water advisory is not the same as a boil order. A boil order is issued by the Department of Health. It means you have a definite contaminant and you are at risk. We have not had a boil order in this Province since before the year 2000. A boil water advisory, on the other hand, shows that we are monitoring; they are issued to reflect caution and precautionary measures that are optional for people to pursue.

I have my own well; I live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and I have a private, old-fashioned dug well. It is my responsibility to get that water tested and I boil it before I brush my teeth and before I drink it, certainly a good practice for everyone to follow. A bit of common sense goes a long way sometimes too.

Legislative authority over drinking water comes from a number of sources too, Mr. Speaker. We

have a number of bills pertaining to it: the Water Resources Act, the City of St. John's Act, the City of Corner Brook Act, the Municipalities Act, the Municipal Affairs Act, and the Public Health Act.

What are we doing, Mr. Speaker, to address water quality issues? That was one of the questions posed by members opposite earlier today. Well, of course, the drinking water monitoring and recording system that we have under way, the source water protection – now this falls under Section 39 of the Water Resources Act, and these areas, drinking water resources are classified as protected public water supply areas. Of course, any development in these areas would require a permit from the Department of Environment and Conservation. Decisions are based on policy guidelines; currently, 86 per cent of surface water sources are protected and 31 per cent of groundwater sources are protected.

Next, Mr. Speaker, we do operator education. We do Capital Works cost-shared funding. We undertake corrective measures when there is a need. There has been a significant increase in the number of disinfection systems and water treatment plants in the Province – again, as we said earlier, seventy-two new water treatment systems; among these are the portable water dispensing units, some of which I have in my district. We are certainly very happy to avail of these sources of assistance.

We undertake research and development too, Mr. Speaker. We do studies on our water and we do testing and analyses on a regular basis and publish these on our Web site.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, that is happening and is very important to note is regionalization. Government is encouraging communities to explore options for regionalization, including having regional drinking water systems; you can look in here to St. John's, to the regional drinking water system. Exploits has a regional drinking water system. We can talk about smaller communities; Botwood and Peterview are in and of themselves too small to afford a water treatment plant of their own, but by tying

in to the Grand Falls water treatment system, they now avail of treated water. These are options that are out there that we really need to start looking at and exploring, Mr. Speaker.

You can also have regionalization in terms of shared services and expertise. Of course, in Western we have a regional operator, and in Central we have a regional operator. So, as we move forward, finding the solutions, of course, is a responsibility on everybody's part. As a government we are indeed very, very committed to working with municipalities and residents to find solutions, and one of these, of course, is working together.

Now, I talked a little bit earlier about the portal that we have here in Newfoundland. The Newfoundland and Labrador Water Resources Portal contains information on public drinking water supplies, and that is probably where many of your stats came from today. It also has maps of the protected public water supplies. For the public out there who may have been listening today – and have an interest, I am sure, in this very important topic – you can access the portal through the following Web site: [maps.gov.nl.ca/water](http://maps.gov.nl.ca/water). This is the first of its kind, Mr. Speaker, in Canada. We are again leading the way, not just with training, but with our accountability and our data disclosure.

We also have an annual report that we publish each year, Mr. Speaker. It is available on-line and it is entitled *Drinking Water Safety in Newfoundland and Labrador*. I certainly would encourage everyone who has an interest in drinking water to research these sites and become informed about the options that are out there for lowering TCMs, if you happen to be in an area where your TCM count is higher. Again, I want to reiterate: far, far, far less risk from TCMs than what you would have from an actual contaminant in your water, so I strongly encourage the chlorination to take place in communities.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker – because I am quickly running out of time; it is amazing how fast fifteen minutes can go when you are on your feet on the floor of the House – the Sierra legal

defence club has been monitoring Newfoundland Labrador's water protection program since 2001, and a report, Mr. Speaker, is issued by them every five years.

You want to talk about where we have come with water in Newfoundland and Labrador and what we have done as a government in Newfoundland and Labrador? In 2001, the Sierra Club gave us a D grade. They came back five years later, in 2006, and we were upgraded to a C minus. Mr. Speaker, in 2011, we received a B grade. So this clearly reflects, at a national level, continuous improvement, and this is being observed by a national watchdog. Our government initiatives are effective, they are working, and we are making progress.

Is there a ways to go? Absolutely; but, by working together, becoming more aware of the issues out there and what we can all do together to mitigate them, we certainly will continue to see improved water in Newfoundland and Labrador. This government has made significant strides.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

The Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand here today to speak on this for a few minutes.

**MR. JACKMAN:** Do you want leave before you get up?

**MR. JOYCE:** The Minister of Education is saying: Do you want leave? No, Mr. Speaker, I do not need leave yet, because I am sure by the time I get the proper information put out there that you will be withdrawing leave.

I will just get to it, Mr. Speaker. There was a motion put in here today, a private member's motion – which I will be supporting. It is not

contentious; it is just looking after the safety. The government then had to go ahead and make an amendment. I will just explain to the people that once you make an amendment to it, it takes away the substance or it tries to add to it somehow to give some slant on the government, Mr. Speaker.

Here is the amendment: consider the following measures as part of the Newfoundland and Labrador safe drinking water strategy which came in effect in 2007-2008, Mr. Speaker. The government put in an amendment that they want us to support. I will just give you some facts on this, Mr. Speaker.

I know a lot of members opposite get a prepared speech, and get up and support government, but here are some facts, Mr. Speaker. In the past number of years, the number of Newfoundland and Labrador communities with high levels of THMs in their drinking water has nearly doubled – doubled, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have to go support this. More than 160 water supplies in the Province currently exceed health guidelines.

In the latest report, the number of water supplies with high THM levels has nearly doubled to 128. In total, 119 communities are affected. Mr. Speaker, a lot of this was done since they brought in this so-called water strategy. There is no doubt, I say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, there has been money put into the system, and I will go back through some of these stats. There has been money put into the system for safe water for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

If you take the list and go through the list of people who do not have safe drinking water – and it is on-line. Here is the list, Mr. Speaker; people can go on-line. Do you know one of the biggest concerns and the reason why, for water – and we heard the member speaking and talking about Walkerton and we talk about lack of chlorine. Do you know one of the major concerns why they cannot use it? Lack of funds to be able to operate their system. We had an agreement by Municipal Affairs. This is the agreement we had by Municipal Affairs that we

are going to have a brand new fiscal arrangement for municipalities this year.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something and I will say this publicly: If there is a new fiscal arrangement that was done in conjunction with the federation of municipalities, which was committed to happen in this 2013 Budget and it is an agreement with what the municipalities wanted, I will stand up and support it. I will stand up and support it, Mr. Speaker, because the commitment was made.

If you go through the list, Mr. Speaker – and people can look at it. This is not propaganda; this is on the Web site. One of the concerns and the reasons why they do not have proper safe drinking: They cannot operate the system that they have. They cannot operate the system.

When we look out there and we see all the members talking about oh, we do not want relate Walkerton; we have to have chlorine. You have to realize it is one thing to give someone a Cadillac system, but the second part is you have to ensure that they have the funds and they can use the system. I am not criticizing government for putting in these systems; I am saying that we have to find a way to ensure that the towns operating these systems have the financial means to it. If not, I fear we will have a Walkerton on our hands, Mr. Speaker.

I only have a minute left, Mr. Speaker. I will not get into all the other information that is here. I will just let the people of the Province know that the number of municipalities that have been on boil orders has increased. The number that cannot use their system has increased.

When you ask a member of this House of Assembly to support an amendment for the 2008 water strategy and the water strategy is not working, I cannot support the amendment. I will support the motion because I think it is a motion where we are trying to educate people in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, there are avenues where we need safe testing for water.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

It being 4:45 p.m. on Private Members' Day, in accordance with Standing Order 63 I go back to the mover of the motion, the Member for The Straits – White Bay North to conclude debate.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank all colleagues who contributed –

**MR. HEDDERSON:** A point of order.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation, on a point of order.

**MR. HEDDERSON:** A point of order; and I do not mean to take away the member's time so I will be as quick as possible.

In public interest, the Member for St. John's East got up and talked about wells in specific areas that have not been tested for THMs since 2001-2002. I just want to assure –

**MS MICHAEL:** (Inaudible), Mr. Speaker, it is 4:45.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation, to finish his point of order.

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Again, Mr. Speaker, trying to be as quick as I can, but it is for the people out there who have already been referenced, like in my District of Harbour Main. I just want to say they have not been tested for THMs. This is about safety. I will say to the members opposite, that basically –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I think it is indefensible of the Minister of Environment and Conservation to get up and try and blame an issue on a past Administration, something that has been around since 2001. There really needs to be testing done on something of that, to that point of order.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people who did contribute to the debate. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Conception Bay East – Bell Island, Bonavista South, the Member for the Bay of Islands, and my colleague from St. John's East.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune had said that it is commonplace for people to be boiling their water. Well, in an area of Newfoundland and Labrador in the country of Canada, I really do not think that should be commonplace. I think, is that where we have really come to and come so far?

When you look at annual reports and what is made available, because the member did say people should read up on the Drinking Water Safety annual report. Well, the most recent one that is available is May, 2011. We are not getting the most updated information being made available. This is a very serious matter and these things should be presented and made available to people.

I want to actually talk about – in 2008, the Rural Drinking Water Safety Initiative was introduced to address problems of small rural communities. It provided potable water dispensing units to some small communities. It talked about setting up the training units and it earmarked part of the Municipal Operating Grants for small towns, communities to deal with their water supplies and looked at some solutions for larger communities.

Mr. Speaker, the problems remain when it comes to safe and clean drinking water. There were studies. There were two reports. One was the Study on Operation and Maintenance of Drinking Water Infrastructure in Newfoundland

and Labrador. That was done in 2010. It said that many operations are not adequately trained, and training is not compulsory. It talked about operators usually having other public works responsibilities, that there are inconsistencies, and that water treatment systems are not receiving enough preventative maintenance to extend the life of their service. That can be really costly when that situation happens.

Mr. Speaker, also in a study of 2008, under Perceptions of Public Drinking Water in Newfoundland and Labrador: A Mixed Methods Study, it talked about how Newfoundland and Labrador residents need to be better informed about water appearance, the real aesthetics piece. It also talked about public education has improved since 2008.

Government has played a role here, but the report envisioned a more comprehensive public education program than what we would currently have, so better communication. This is something that we need to see. We need to see that come forward so we can make better decisions when we look at water and water quality in the Province.

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador have recommended to the government more money for communities to develop these proper systems, for training and resources. I know it was talked about at MNL that there is an opportunity at the conventions to do this training at no cost. There are instances where there are small towns that cannot even afford the cost of travel to send volunteer councillors or part-time clerks to attend this training. It can be a high expenditure. So that is not always something that is available.

There were recommendations from these two external studies that mandatory training and certification for operators, regulations for treatment and monitoring, that we have the appropriate and affordable designs for water systems. In some cases, we see the designs may be too large. We are putting in very big pipes for a system that could handle maybe a city size versus when the town only has 500, 600, or 700 residents. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Capital funding priority for communities that do not meet the Canadian drinking water standards, and a provincial education strategy to inform consumers. We really need to look at that. I recognize the Departments of Health and Environment have pamphlets and a video, but we would like to see more, more public initiatives.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I want to take this time, Mr. Speaker, to recognize that MNL have said that covering the cost of basic services like drinking water is challenging for municipalities, especially those small ones. They have limited revenue tools provided by the provincial government and it forces the municipalities to make unreasonable choices like turning off chlorination systems because they do not have the revenue, they do not have that revenue to maintain these systems. I think we could have a lot fewer boil advisories; we could have far fewer if we had taken care of the systemic problems.

Municipalities are being downloaded more and more rules and regulations. Services are increased by these pressures from provincial and federal jurisdictions and laws being passed, but these municipalities – which have far bigger responsibilities – only receive about eight cents for every tax dollar collected and their revenue must go very far to provide water, sewer, roads, street lighting, garbage collection, fire services, recreation, cultural facilities, administration and staff for operations, and other services. It is quite evident that these municipalities need different solutions.

We talked about how the government has increased the MOGs as a one-time instance. That is a good thing for sure, but there are still many small municipalities – to the minister, Mr. Speaker: there are so many small municipalities, that increases in the MOGs are so marginal that they still cannot deal with all their infrastructure needs.

I would like to say this to Municipal Affairs, to the Finance Minister, and to the Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I think there are solutions with which we can help provide municipalities with increased funding without taking it from the Municipal Affairs budget – which does have a limited budget, right? There is only so much money, and they have earmarked some of it for water, but like many things, municipalities need to do multi-year planning just as the Province should be doing multi-year planning.

I would like to see where instead of using general tax revenue – which there is a limited amount of, when we look at a budget and the fiscal framework of the Province –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** – but we do, Mr. Speaker, have an Immigrant Investor Fund, which is being invested in small savings. There is a five-year payback period when we get that money, so there is like a 7.5 per cent interest rate. What we could be doing is looking at that and funding loans for up to five years or four years. Many people have a fixed income, like a municipality; a small one has a fixed budget. When most people go and buy a car, they take it out and they finance it for a period of maybe five, six, seven years. When people go to look at big-ticket items like purchasing furniture, they sometimes get a year of reprieve where they do not have to make a payment.

In this case, municipalities are going to get constant revenue from the tax base. They cannot go bankrupt, based on the Municipalities Act, so they can do planning for a five-year period to purchase larger-ticket items, like dealing with their water issues. If we look at that, it takes a while for them sometimes to build up Gas Tax Funds or build up the money for the MOGs that it has or from the tax base. Sometimes they

know that it is going to be years down the road that they are going to receive some additional revenue. They can plan and we can give them this money earlier and charge them the interest rate that is needed, but they will pay it back. We can look at doing flexible financing, Mr. Speaker.

There are things in which we can do this for small municipalities, the ones that are on the boil water advisories. Look at micro-lending to improve their water systems. Municipalities can work with these repayments under five years.

You could look at a third-party supplier – maybe like the Community Business Development Corporations or the credit unions, other financial lending institutions or co-operatives – to look at providing this. The CBDCs, for instance, have a social enterprise loan where they can lend to municipalities for commercial activity such as snow clearing to help bring down their financing cost. Those are things that they can do. They can offer flexible payments so that if they can budget for winter, when snow clearing needs to be paid for, they can do that and they can adjust and budget accordingly.

We have to empower our smaller municipalities and our rural communities to provide them with these options. We have to be a little more flexible as a government to be able to provide them. There are solutions to fix many of these problems.

They can also provide returns, because that interest and that payback will be given back to the Immigrant Investor Fund, which needs to be paid back to the federal government. It is not investing in a project that is not going to provide a return, because municipalities, small ones, over the long term can plan and make these affordable payments. It can be done and it does not have to take away from the structural problem of a provincial deficit that we have to make cuts and cuts and cuts to departments.

These are ways to find solutions for these communities and absolutely enhance and improve the quality of life for people all across Newfoundland and Labrador, to provide safe,

good-quality drinking water and move on that. Those are things that we absolutely need to do. It is not something that we should do; we need to do it, and we need to do it now. That is something that we can do. That fund has \$267 million, and I am not proposing to take away money that will not be paid back. I am actually looking beyond the bonds and beyond the limited amount of return that is getting, because the Auditor General recognized that the fund is going to lose money.

Right now, if everybody cashed in their bonds, we would be at a net loss, in the way that money is invested. Yes, it has made money over a time, but like the Finance Minister, who likes talking about net debt and where we are in the Province, I understand the fiscal realities. That is what I studied. I did commerce, I ran a business, and I understand there are better options. That is what I did in my professional career, was provide advice to businesses – to rural businesses, to small communities - on how we can advance our regions.

This is something that we cannot be so inflexible to, and we must listen to this. Because if we do not, our long-term health of our communities, of our quality of life that our rural areas are going to, they are going to suffer. The health and quality of regions – it is going to have a big impact on the social implications of communities.

Mr. Speaker, I really feel that there is a lot of passion towards the issue of water, because it is such a basic necessity of life. It is important to each and every one of us. So, it is evident that action be taken. We recognize that the government has been taking action. More action needs to be taken, and we can do it without breaking the back and really helping us all. We need to co-operate on this issue to find the solutions. There has been some movement done.

The original motion called for action, for a new strategy, and to look at many things that other people have called on. I am pleased to see that government will consider these initiatives, these measures, as it moves forward to amend its

current strategy; because it does need to be amended. It does need some further movement for results.

The NDP, we will keep pressing this issue and look at doing our role as opposition to hold government accountable, but also wanting to work with them to provide solutions on how we can better spend taxpayers' money and use it so that we can benefit all people across the Province. That is something that is not up for consideration.

In closing, I would just like to say that inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation has a real direct and imminent consequence for quality of life, for food security, long-term socioeconomic development, and the eradication of poverty.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Is the House ready for the vote?

We will be voting first on the amendment as put forward by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

Shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Carried.

Shall the motion, as amended, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Carried.

This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.