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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start today's proceedings, I want to welcome some special guests to our gallery. Today we have with us thirty-one Level II students from Botwood Collegiate, together with their teachers: Darryl Chippett and Todd Andrews. They are also with some representatives from the Community Youth Network staff: Colleen Hayter, Darlene Rice, and Jeff Pope.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of Exploits, the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune; the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of St. John's Centre; the Member for the District of Lake Melville; and the Member for the District of Harbour Grace.

The hon. the Member for the District of Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Shane Pope, a Level II student of Botwood Collegiate, has been volunteering at the Botwood Boys and Girls Club for over four years; however, he would have never imagined it would turn into a national experience.

Because of his dedication to the club, Shane was selected to attend this year's biannual conference in Kamloops, British Columbia. In December, he was very surprised to receive an e-mail stating he was selected to serve on the National Youth Council. In his words, he said,

"I was so excited; you'd think I had won a million dollars."

Mr. Speaker, Shane will serve on the Boys and Girls Club National Council for a two-year term. Shane will now play a role in planning the 2015 conference, and will get to travel to participate in national meetings.

Shane is in the gallery today with the delegation, and I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing Shane's dedication to the youth network and his appointment to the National Youth Council.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to throw a bouquet to the South Coast International Women's Day Committee. Since 2009, this group of women have inspired and united residents in the cause to end violence against women and to advance gender equality.

Thank you to all the committee members who, from its inception, have made invaluable contributions to help raise awareness of the tragedies of domestic violence and to help celebrate the accomplishments of gender equity; members Vivian House, Rhonda MacDonald, Louise Bennett, Carolynn Fowlow, Melita Collier, Tracie Carter, Sandra Dominie, Mildred Skinner, Catherine Bourden, Marie Bungay, Mandy McGrath, and Megan Stone have shown great resourcefulness and spirit in establishing this committee.

At its fifth annual sold-out gala event, I had the opportunity to commend these women for making such important contributions to advancing the status of women in this Province, including promoting women's opportunities in

non-traditional occupations and instilling the message that violence prevention is everyone's responsibility.

I ask that all members of this hon. House join me to congratulate and thank the South Coast International Women's Day Committee and encourage them to keep up the fabulous work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a person who devoted countless hours to the youth of his community. Born on July 10, 1948, to Aubrey and Phyllis Harris, Clifford Harris spent twenty-eight years as a volunteer with the 837 Northeast Air Cadet Squadron in Springdale.

Many of the budding youth of this squadron went on to become very successful in their chosen careers, upon which Cliff had a huge impact. In addition to sixteen years as a volunteer firefighter, Clifford spent time with the Royal Canadian Legion, with the Masons, and helped out with Scouts Canada. Big or small, Cliff was willing to offer his time, talent, and energy to any group who were in need.

Recognizing his outstanding contributions to his community in 2012, Cliff was the proud recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee award and also was named Springdale citizen of the year.

Not only is Cliff considered a tremendous volunteer, but he is also seen as a hero. On two different occasions he rescued two young lives for which the families will be forever grateful.

I invite all colleagues in this hon. House to help me send accolades to Clifford Harris an outstanding community volunteer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Excuse me.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the fifth Canadian Rangers Patrol Group and their participation in Exercise Northern Sojourn.

Between February 3 and March 9, approximately 1,200 Canadian and American soldiers as well as Canadian Rangers participated in activities that were designed to teach troops essential combat skills in Canada's north.

During this operation, the Canadian Rangers were an integral part to assisting and teaching soldiers how to survive in arctic conditions. Rangers taught skills such as how to chop firewood and catch their own meals, things that are a way of life to many Labradorians but were certainly new, Mr. Speaker, to many of the soldiers.

The Rangers helped ensure that many of these soldiers who attended the exercise left with a greater knowledge of how to travel, survive, and enjoy, Mr. Speaker, the northern wilderness during this exercise.

I ask all hon. members of this House to join me in recognizing the great work of the fifth Canadian Rangers Patrol Group and their participation in Exercise Northern Sojourn.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Lady Sentinels Basketball Team of Carbonear Collegiate who won the School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador 4A Tier 2 Provincial Basketball Championship on the weekend of March 13-15 in Deer Lake.

This marked the first time that a Carbonear Collegiate basketball team participated in a SSNL provincial tournament since 2010. The Lady Sentinels were among the youngest team to enter the tournament, but intimidation never set in, as they defeated Stephenville in a final score of 54-36.

The victory marked the first provincial title for the school since 2011, but I can assure this House it certainly will not be their last.

Members of the Lady Sentinels team included: Morgan Clarke, Chelsea Walsh, Emily Kennedy, Chelsey Parsons, Stephanie Slade, Mallory Gillespie, Devon Nicholson, Arianna Lee, Jasmine Slade, Meghan Lehr, Najaula Sparkes, Brianna Roberts, and Michaela Case. They were accompanied by Coach, Ed Jarvis, and Manager, Kerrilynn Maloney.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the Lady Sentinels of Carbonear Collegiate on winning the SSNL 4A Tier 2 Provincial Basketball Championship.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am juggling a lot here today.

Today is Resiliency Day at Booth Memorial – it is a good thing – a personal development day to help students learn to deal with stress and

anxiety – perhaps I should have gone there today.

Thanks to a grant from the Community Addictions Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Fund of the Department of Health and Community Services, students are attending sessions on Relationships and Restorative Justice; Building Emotional Muscle; Time Management; Yoga and Meditation; Mindfulness and Happiness; and Team Building and Tai Chi.

Sessions have been running throughout the entire regular school day. We spoke with people there earlier today and they were really impressed with how well it was going.

Teacher/librarian Michelle Hounsell gets the credit for taking the lead on this unique event, but the whole school got involved along with outside participants. Sessions are being conducted by teaching staff, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre (Planned Parenthood), Thrive – both of these non-profits are in St. John's Centre – and the City of St. John's, with nutrition breaks from Kids Eat Smart.

Thanks to Booth and Michelle Hounsell for taking on this initiative which will benefit the students who are participating for the rest of their time in school – and probably their whole lives.

Bravo to Booth and all those involved.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to pay tribute to Dr. Priscilla Renouf, an internationally celebrated archaeologist who passed away last Friday. I know I echo the sentiments of the archaeology community in our Province, and indeed the world, when I say that her passing is both a great personal and professional loss.

While Dr. Renouf made groundbreaking discoveries in Southern Labrador, much of her life's work was conducted on the Northern Peninsula, particularly in Port au Choix. At this location, she uncovered and reconstructed human presence in the area dating back 5,500 years. Her work unearthed evidence of four Aboriginal cultures, occupation of the area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Europeans, as well as the current settlement. Throughout her work in this region of our Province, Mr. Speaker, she brought global attention to her discoveries, and helped explain the significance of these finds in the context of similar work around the world.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Renouf was a renowned scholar who served as the Canada Research Chair of North Atlantic Archaeology. In 2010, she received the highest academic honour in Canada by being elected as a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. She was also the recipient of the President's Award for Outstanding Research; member of the Canadian Museum of Civilization Board of Trustees; co-founder of LINK, an international program of interdisciplinary research; executive member of the North Atlantic Biocultural Organization; author of many academic papers; and also the first Board Chair of The Rooms. Her expertise was regularly sought for national and international speaking opportunities.

There is a deep connection to our own Provincial Archaeology Office, Mr. Speaker, as all of our provincial archaeologists were taught and mentored by Dr. Renouf. Undoubtedly, her legacy will live on in these many individuals who strive to tell the story of our beginnings on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. colleagues to join me in offering heart felt condolences to Dr. Renouf's family, her co-workers at Memorial University, and all colleagues in the archaeology community. She will be remembered as a major influence in the archaeology world and her work in our Province will remain a monumental contribution in understanding our own history here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement, and also join government and all Members of the House of Assembly in paying tribute to Dr. Renouf.

Dr. Renouf will have a lasting legacy in our Province for her work with Memorial University and the many discoveries, of course, on the Northern Peninsula. I can remember many, many years ago making the first trip up to the Northern Peninsula and actually visiting those areas.

She was an internationally acclaimed scholar, as we all know, and focused her research really on how prehistoric people adapted to the changing environment in the North Atlantic. Her research helped provide a context for understanding more recent North Atlantic settlements.

For years, Dr. Renouf has focused on research in Port au Choix, and I know that she has developed a deep connection with many people in that area. I know that Dr. Renouf has made many connections to people throughout the Province, and I acknowledge her connection with the staff at her own Provincial Archaeology Office. Even within our own Opposition office, we have two members who are actually previous students of Dr. Renouf. The MHA for St. Barbe, when we chatted about this earlier, talked about the remarkable work that she has done.

I offer my condolences to the family and friends. Her work, I am sure, will live on as the Province has lost one of its most esteemed educators.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I, too, would like to express my sadness on the passing of Dr. Priscilla Renouf. Dr. Renouf was not only a world-renowned archaeologist and leader in her field, but also a leader among her colleagues and students at Memorial University.

We were lucky to have an academic archaeologist of her calibre active in academic and community archaeology, a key figure in building the MUN archaeology program into one of the best in the world, coming straight from the community of Newfoundland and Labrador. She was a gifted educator who not only imparted knowledge to her students, but also knew how to get the best out of them and help them excel in their careers, which I have heard from many of them, Mr. Speaker.

Her contribution to this Province's archaeological knowledge and high standards of practice will be remembered. I give my sincere and deepest condolences to her family and her friends.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to provide an update on the Supporting Youth with

Transitions pilot program. This program provides young people who are receiving services under the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services with the opportunity to avail of additional supports as they prepare for adulthood.

In spring 2013, our government invested \$401,600 to expand Supporting Youth with Transitions Province-wide in order to provide more youth with hands-on interventions and supports that will help empower them to live independently as adults.

Our government recognizes the unique challenges faced by youth, and that is why five life skills co-ordinators have been hired to assist the department's social workers in carrying out that program.

Mr. Speaker, these co-ordinators are located in Clarendville, Gander, Whitbourne, Stephenville, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. They work directly with youth to identify and address their life skills needs. These necessary life skills include a variety of areas such as daily living and self-care, relationships and communication, housing choices and financial management, as well as career and education planning.

Supporting Youth with Transitions is also being offered in metro region through Choices for Youth, which is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that provides a wide range of services including housing, employment, and educational opportunities for youth.

Mr. Speaker, since the implementation of the expanded pilot program in October 2013, we are already seeing the positive impacts it is having on the seventy-five youth currently accessing this program. These youth have completed life skills assessments in order to develop plans to help achieve their goals. To date, the program is seeing increased family reconnections, and educational and employment engagement for participating youth.

This is evidence, Mr. Speaker, that we are achieving our overall goal of Supporting Youth with Transitions by ensuring that everyone

involved is working together to meet the needs of young people and to help them successfully transition to the next phase of their lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, the fire on Springdale Street that cost a man his life illustrated for this Province a worst-case scenario of not properly supporting youth at risk. One of the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate in her report SIXTEEN was to conduct life skills assessments. So we are glad to see this recommendation being implemented.

One of the shortcomings identified by the advocate in her report on the fire was the monthly allowance for rent for a client of the youth services program. At \$500 per month, these youth at risk are severely restricted in choice as to where they can live. This inadequate funding in a city where rent is at \$900 per month means youth, like John, end up in bedsitters and boarding houses.

One of the advocate's recommendations was to provide sufficient funding for safe and affordable housing options. We look forward in the spirit of accountability, to the minister indicating to the public which recommendations of this report they intend to implement. This pilot program, however, is an encouraging step forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Supporting Youth with Transitions pilot project sounds like a great initiative. The more concrete assistance we can give marginalized youth the better; but, Mr. Speaker, where is the transition plan to ensure the safety of the children the minister is uprooting and moving in his new level four residential care initiative?

Two weeks ago, out of the blue, some of our most vulnerable children in care were told they would be moved from their current stable group homes where some have lived for years to a private sector provider. No one has told them exactly when they are moving, where they are moving, and who will be looking after them.

In Estimates, I asked the minister what his transition protocol and plan was for these children, and he did not have one. These youth who need desperately stability will be moved in forty-five days and there is no plan. Many are afraid and confused. This is a serious situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to highlight our government's investment to secure the future of our forest industry in the western region and the entire Province for the benefit of residents and communities.

In February, I was delighted to join the Premier in Corner Brook to announce details of a loan agreement for up to \$110 million and a power assets and water rights purchase agreement between the provincial government and Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited.

By investing in the pulp and paper mill, government is reaching out to the entire forest

industry and supporting 5,500 people who are employed, particularly in the Province's rural communities in harvesting, sawmilling, and value-added enterprises.

Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited is one of the largest private employers in the Province and is a strong contributor to the provincial economy. Along with its suppliers, it contributes \$124 million annually to the gross domestic product.

With this loan, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited will be able to carry out capital projects that will reduce costs, improve productivity, and increase the paper mill's competitiveness on the global newsprint market. The loan is secured by a mortgage and company hydro assets, including the Deer Lake Power Plant and Watson's Brook Power Plant. The provincial government will purchase the power assets, water rights, and all related rights to the power assets for the people of the Province if the mill closes.

These agreements are the result of dedicated work by people in several provincial government departments who are to be commended for their efforts. They have worked closely with staff at Kruger Incorporated, the parent company of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited, who are equally enthusiastic about the long-term viability of the Corner Brook operation.

Mr. Speaker, our continued investment in Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited is great news for the forest industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. These agreements will ensure the benefits from our renewable resources will continue well into the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Of course, the \$110 million loan agreement with Kruger was something that the Official Opposition – and at the meeting, I understand our Member for Bay of Islands was at that announcement as well.

Fifty-five hundred jobs in the forestry industry, many of them in rural areas of our Province, is what this loan was all about, supporting the forestry industry in general, let alone the \$124 million gross domestic product that it means to our Province in GDP. It is important also because it is a renewable resource.

Managing our forestry industry in the Province right now really needs a Province-wide strategy, one where we can see the pulp and paper industry, one where we can see our sawmill industry, and indeed our pellet plant industry that could be working as an integrated system. Right now this is currently not happening. We know we have a major sawmill in the Province right now that will not be able to operate twelve months of the year simply because of wood supply.

A management strategy for the provincial resource is indeed something we need to secure. Right now we are not able to supply our local customers. So, Mr. Speaker, we have made a major investment in a pellet plant right now that is not producing any jobs but is something we really need to continue to work with because there is a significant opportunity to make sure that that plant can provide jobs in rural areas of our Province.

Right now in my own district, as an example, we have a pressure treatment plant that is actually importing wood from New Brunswick to make sure that the operation is continuing. In this day and age when we have seen the closure of two pulp and paper mills and some sawmills in our Province, there should be enough wood supply, if managed properly in our Province, to make sure that we have viable industries here.

I do want to thank the staff, both at Natural Resources and with Kruger for the hard work that they have done in putting this together. I think it will go a long way in providing a viable future for the forestry industry in the Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. This is good information about the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper – if not exactly news; we have known these details for a while.

I have confidence that the workers at Corner Brook Pulp and Paper will make the facility a success with their incomparable skill and hard work. It would be great to get statements from this minister regarding other parts of this Province's forestry sector.

Could the minister report about the Northern Peninsula with over \$9 million invested in forestry products and things apparently at a standstill? Could we get a statement about the very expensive expropriation of Abitibi-Bowater's central assets and timber rights? What plans have government for this resource? We have heard little on the plans for the timber and a lot on what will be the huge upcoming expense of remediating the mill site by this government. Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Let us have some more statements about the realities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week the federal government made massive cuts to the shrimp quotas in our Province. These cuts were expected for months and they are devastating to our offshore operators and could affect up to 2,200 plant workers. In response to this the minister said that we will ask the feds to revisit the decision.

I ask the Premier: Aside from asking the feds for these cuts to be revisited, what is your plan to fight for the workers in the forestry industry?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the fishing industry we have been advocating against LIFO since 2010. It is very clear on record in regard to this is very inhibited to the inshore sector.

In 1996 when temporary access for the inshore fleet was given to this resource, then in 1997 the licences were confirmed and they were made permanent stakeholders in the industry, we were quite clear that they were investing in the industry; they were stakeholders. We have advocated that LIFO needs to be removed.

The sustainability of the resource, not pit one sector against another to make sure that the inshore fleet – we recognize the science cuts need to be made. We are saying let us take those cuts, distribute them equally to both sectors so that the inshore fleet can continue what it needs to do in terms of rural Newfoundland and those jobs that were mentioned in terms of processing harvesters and all those support companies.

It is very important. We told the federal government we want them changed and we expect them changed, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed that was meant to be the forestry sector – the fisheries sector. I thank the minister for responding.

In the press release on Saturday, the provincial government said that they are currently analyzing the anticipated impacts and will be meeting with the industry leaders in the coming days to determine the best ways to address this challenge, with this issue being raised by people in the industry for months.

I ask the Premier: These cuts were expected for some time, so why did you wait until last weekend before even thinking about the best ways to address this challenge?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, over the past number of months, I and my officials have met with the inshore shrimp fleet and the FFAW fishers, certainly a broad spectrum in terms of the industry and who was involved. We followed this and, as I said, advocated and argued that this is not fair. It is not fair for the inshore sector. It needs to be changed as we move forward.

Again, we have been quite clear on this. It is needs to be changed. It is not reflective of how the industry needs to move forward. This inshore fleet, 250 harvesters, have invested. Everybody in the federal government has supported rationalization. They have gone out and bought out enterprises. They have invested heavily. They need this resource and access to it to run their operations and their enterprises.

Again, I would say we met with industry. Since 2010 we have been on record as saying that LIFO needs to change. We have met with

industry over the last year. We are meeting now with industry over the next couple days to see how we move forward and what the particular effects will be of this in different communities.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It seems like a lot of meetings, but in 2006 the federal government had been promising joint management for our fisheries. They specifically said they would work with interested provinces for a system of increased provincial management; however, eight years later there is still no joint fisheries management in our Province.

I ask the Premier: Why has your government not moved forward with the feds on this commitment that was made by the Conservative government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of joint management I have been public in the new year in regard to joint management. I announced this morning when I was at the Marine Institute that we will move forward now and make recommendations to the federal government in regard to looking at joint management.

Mr. Speaker, because of the investments we have made since 2010 in regard to the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research, we invested \$13 million. We could have waited. Where we saw the federal government back out of science and not putting research where they should have, we stepped in and put that money in so we could build the expertise and knowledge of this

Province for ecosystem research so we can build our fishing industry.

This morning I announced again we will be reinvesting another \$5 million to continue that work, to work with the science we have built here in the Province, the inventory of science. The scientists right now are up to well over twenty-five grad students and scientists who are involved in the fishery in this Province. We have that inventory built and we look to the federal government to joint manage because we need to be (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It seems that you have invested a lot of money and you are really not talking to the feds. They have encouraged you, if you are interested to do that, since 2006. As you said, in 2010 the provincial government launched its own fisheries research initiative and to date has spent \$13 million on that. The results are indicating that cod is making a comeback, and we know that cod is a predator of shrimp.

I ask the Premier: Is this research being shared with the federal government, and was it taken into consideration before those recent cuts were made?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, the ecosystem research has been done since 2010. In terms of consultations with DFA and DFO, we provide all the information we have available to DFO. Certainly, we believe it is second to none. The scientific community we built and the inventory we built is second to none. The work we are doing on cod is done nowhere else in the

world, I understand, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the type of satellite tracking and the types of things we are doing.

An assessment this morning, a briefing with Dr. Rose and his group of scientists, indicates in areas of the Province we are seeing good science in regard to cod in terms of the return of that species. It looks good, but again we need to protect that resource as we move forward. That is why we want to be at the table, that we have the science, we have the expertise, we have the industry, and we want to be there with the federal government in joint management of that resource, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the minister is saying they want to be there and we know that they were encouraged to be there since 2006.

I ask the minister: Why aren't you there?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, joint management is something that is arranged between the federal government and the Province. We have been there; we want to be there. The federal government, it is under their jurisdiction right now. We are trying to manage a fishery where we have control of the processing. We do not have control over the licensing, the quota allocations, all of those things.

We have put programs in place to build this. I do not know where the hon. member is to. We just announced under CETA \$120 million with \$280 million leveraged from the federal government that we want to build this fishery and continue to grow. We believe in the fishery,

we believe in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are going to continue to work and make sure we are at the table to grow this industry as we know it can be in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: You believe in the fishery. You were encouraged to be there in 2006, if you were interested. It has not happened, and now you say you want to be there, I say, Mr. Speaker.

These cuts will affect the viability of processing plants in our Province and will put 2,200 jobs in jeopardy. These cuts also will affect the sustainability of many of our rural communities.

I ask the Premier: In the past you have used a temporary one-year fisheries adjustment program for plant closures; what are you prepared to do for the long-term viability of rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is one thing we are going to do – I am not sure of the hon. members on the other side, because they seem confused in terms of international trade deals and what that is going to mean in terms of markets and certainly access to bringing down quotas, bringing down tariffs, and certainly in the EU. Secondary processing; right now there are limits on what we can send in, for example, to the EU in regard to secondary processing.

When CETA is signed and formalized, those will come down. We can do primary branding right here in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, in rural communities so we can drive activity in our processing facilities in Newfoundland and

Labrador, selling it to one of the largest markets in the world.

We believe in free market, we believe in free trade, and we believe in building our industry. That is why we negotiated the \$400 million fund. That is why we are investing \$120 million in the fund. I do not know where the hon. member is. Let him stand up and say they agree with it or not. We do, and we are going to build a fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What a difference a month makes for this so-called open and accountable government. On March 5, the Minister of Transportation and Works announced early tenders in order to take advantage of the full construction season. At that time he announced approximately thirty-three kilometres of roadwork for the Bay d'Espoir Highway. The tender document, Mr. Speaker, tells a much different story.

I ask the minister: Why don't you tell the House how much of the thirty-three kilometres in that tender is actually going to be funded in this year's Budget?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since early January, when I announced that the government had pre-committed \$30 million towards different tenders throughout the Province, my department has been very busy getting those tenders ready. I did go to the Bay d'Espoir Highway and I did announce that we would be doing thirty-three kilometres in the Bay d'Espoir Highway. I also announced that it was a multi-year project, as

many of the other projects we are doing throughout the year.

What we are doing, Mr. Speaker, instead of making promises, we are actually making realities. What we are doing is we are saying there is certain work that needs to be done. Over the next couple of years we are going to get the tenders out so that the contractors in the Province can actually schedule the work over the multi-year projects and make sure that the work gets done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do not recall the announcement saying that the thirty-three kilometres was multi-year. I will say it started out in the tender they were going to fund \$5 million of it and cut it back to \$3.6 million.

Mr. Speaker, getting roadwork tenders out early sounds good until you read the fine print. For example, in the major tender announced for the Bay d'Espoir Highway they are only allowing the contractor to do \$3.6 million, which is 20 per cent of the work on that tender.

I ask the minister: Why are you leading the people of the Province to believe that there is much more roadwork in the Budget than will actually get done this year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member across the way should spend some of his time being out to the announcements and then he would know what was actually being announced.

What we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is we are setting up our programs in our tenders this year. The contractors have been asking for this for a long time so that we set up programs and tenders that they can actually go out and schedule the work to get it done.

When it comes to Transportation and Works and it comes to rebuilding, resurfacing highways, you cannot just go in, in a lot of cases, and repave, what we call levelling. Quite often the highway or the roads you are talking about have to be rebuilt, and that cannot all be done overnight. What we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is identifying the work that needs to be done, we put it out to tender, and quite often it starts at one point and will finish at another.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, announcing early tenders is one thing that is new for this Province, but what is also new is telling contractors they can only do 20 per cent of the work in the tender.

Mr. Speaker, it is nothing more than political posturing. You are trying to get political points, I say to the minister, by announcing thirty-three kilometres of roadwork this year, in a tender this year, but only allowing 20 per cent of the work to be done this year.

I ask the minister: Why are you playing politics with road repairs in this Province? Is it because next year is an election year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad to realize that the member across the way realizes next year is an election year because we realized that on this side in 2011, that there was an election coming up. We have

been working towards that and it is called governing, Mr. Speaker. That is what we do on this side of the House.

Since we announced the \$30 million pre-commitment in Transportation and Works I have been very busy, and I compliment the staff in my department for the hard work they have done getting these tenders put together. I have been all over the Province in the last six weeks, Mr. Speaker, announcing different projects. It is a year to year process of building and restructuring the highway system. We have over 10,000 kilometres in this Province and we continue to keep doing the job we are doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, in his recent review of Eastern Health, the Auditor General pointed out there was a lack of monitoring of final tender cost compared to the original awarded cost.

I ask the minister: How can you be assured that taxpayers' dollars are spent properly without the implementation of internal controls as outlined in the Public Tender Act?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we accept what the Auditor General had to say in his report. In that particular instance, we agreed with what the Auditor General had pointed out. There is remedial action that was taken, Mr. Speaker. The process is working. We make sure that when purchases are made and they do not go to tender, we make sure they are done for the right reasons. If they are not done for the right reasons, Mr. Speaker, we go in and we find out what went wrong.

We need to do some remedial work on occasion, Mr. Speaker. It is a rare occurrence. Less than almost 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker, less than 2 per

cent, closer to 1 per cent of all the tenders that are out there end up being untendered, and they are for exceptions, usually. This one here did not fall under that exception, and we went in there and did the remedial work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: I would say to the minister, that based on the Auditor General's report, there is a lot more work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, in his review, the Auditor General also found that current controls are not adequate to prevent or detect fraud or error in areas of purchasing. This is very troubling, to say the least, to the taxpayer who is ultimately on the hook for any cost resulting from this financial mismanagement.

I therefore ask the minister: What does he intend to do to straighten out this mess?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to procurement, we are doing very good work protecting the taxpayers' dollars. We have a department GPA who make sure that all entities are following the legislation and regulations we have in place. We make sure that our forensic audits go into places to check and make sure that entities and government departments are making the right decisions and going through the right processes when they are procuring on behalf of their departments and entities, Mr. Speaker.

There is good work getting done there. Is there room for improvement, Mr. Speaker? Yes there is, and we are working towards improving the system. We are about protecting the taxpayers' dollars every single day, day in, day out, and our civil servants are doing good work, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, in response to concerns about incidents of bullying and other inappropriate behaviours in schools, government released a revised Safe and Caring Schools Policy late last year. The school year is melting away now with the winter snow, and we have yet to hear of any progress on implementing these policies to try and stamp out bullying.

I ask the Minister of Education: What has your department done to see that the new Safe and Caring Schools Policy is in place for this coming September?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we certainly did in this Budget was we identified three units that are going to continue the work that has gone on. We did a review, Mr. Speaker, brought forward the new process, put in place protocols for schools and administrators to use.

Mr. Speaker, our support again this year in this Budget shows our commitment to Safe and Caring Schools in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is teachers and administrators who do this work, not units. The teacher professional development allocation in Budget 2014 has been cut by almost \$1 million. The minister is clearly telling teachers and administrators that he wants them to take on extra responsibilities without adding any additional training or resources.

I ask the minister: How many schools and how many teachers have received professional development training to deal with those inclined to bullying?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am going to commend the teachers, the students, and the larger community for the work that they have done in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, we are not asking teachers and administrators to take on additional work. We are asking them to do it in a different way. The safe and caring schools itinerant teachers who are out there will work with the schools, the school communities, and the staff to make sure that is carried out in a way – right now, teachers and administration are actually doing that work. We are very proud of the work that they have done. This will improve the overall system, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, this morning the Diabetes Association released the health charter for diabetes patients. We have about 58,000 people living with diabetes in our Province and another 88,000 at risk of developing it.

I ask the minister: How many people were diagnosed with type 2 diabetes last month?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can certainly get him that information. I do not have it here with me at the moment, but what I can do is tell him, as a government, what we have done for diabetes and what we have done to address diabetes and to prevent diabetes, Mr. Speaker.

We have provided nearly \$20 million since 2010 for diabetes medications. We have covered fifteen different medications for people on the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program. Mr. Speaker, we are the only government, the best in Canada, to provide insulin pumps for people up to age twenty-five.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: We offer diabetes clinics. We include programming to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and living smoke-free, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are doing about diabetes. I will certainly get him the numbers tomorrow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The minister will not get me the numbers tomorrow because the department does not have them. You will not be able to provide the accurate numbers because the government does not have a diabetes patient registry. The registry is necessary to track diabetes diagnoses and manage the resources needed to care for these patients.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: I ask the minister: Why has your government failed to follow the AG's 2011 recommendation and implement a diabetes registry?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our record, when it comes to diabetes and preventative care around diabetes is a solid one. We certainly appreciate the recommendations from the AG report and I am sure that the Minister of Health and the department is following up.

I did intend to try to get those numbers; I do not understand why you would ask a question if you already knew the answer. So given that, Mr. Speaker, I guess he does not want the information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister can talk about this government's commitment to diabetes. We have the highest population in Canada of people living with diabetes, a number that is going to grow to one in six in 2024. The question I asked was about a diabetes registry so that we could work with practitioners to track the number of people living with diabetes.

I ask again: Why have we not followed the AG's recommendation and put in place a diabetes registry?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as a department, the Department of Health certainly speaks to stakeholders, speaks to people in the diabetes industry, and speaks to people involved in the health care system on a daily basis. If there is something that is in the AG's report, I have no doubt that the Minister of Health and the excellent officials that work in that department are working on this because if there is something we can do to make people's

lives better when it comes to diabetes, we would certainly be committed to that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, government abandoned its own Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy. Five years ago, the former Premier said this strategy marks the beginning of a new era and reflects the commitment to ensuring the Province can navigate toward prosperity and self-reliance.

Mr. Speaker, with public debt soaring by billions and out-migration of youth at its highest level since 2008, I ask the minister: Will he revisit why this strategy has failed?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell the minister opposite and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that the Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy has been an overwhelming success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Of the forty-one initiatives, Mr. Speaker, most are completed and most are ongoing. They have been incorporated into the work of various government departments. In fact, what came out of the Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy is now informing other strategies within our government, like our immigration work, our Population Growth Strategy, our Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Our Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy was a three-year initiative. It has had great impact and much of the work is ongoing, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, for a very quick question, no preamble.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, the Youth Advisory Committee is supposed to provide policy –

MR. SPEAKER: Your question, please. Directly to your question.

MR. MITCHELMORE: – when will the minister table the report; the last one has been 2011?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs, for a quick response.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the Office of Public Engagement is engaging more young people in this Province than ever before through forums – in every corner of the Province, our work with youth is making a big difference.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

A federal government investigation has suspended the licence of a company in Labrador City allowing them to bring in temporary foreign workers.

I ask the Premier: Does the Province have a current record of the number and places of work of temporary foreign workers in this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is a federal program. It is the responsibility of the federal government to ensure that all employers follow the rules and follow the program.

We have about 3,000 temporary foreign workers in our Province at this particular time. We get that information from the Citizenship and Immigration Canada files. Our responsibility is to make sure under the program that before temporary foreign workers are used that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have an opportunity for a job, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The company in question was suspended – or its licence was suspended after allegations that twenty-six temporary foreign workers were living in one house owned by the company.

I ask the minister: What measures has government taken to monitor the living and working conditions of temporary foreign workers in this Province?

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

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, as I just outlined, this is a federal program and a responsibility of the federal government. They have to make sure that all employers follow the rules, all the rules of the program.

As well, we are engaged in regard to following that program. I have personally met with the minister responsible in Ottawa. We discussed the Temporary Foreign Worker Program at that particular time, but again it is the responsibility of the federal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier then: Why isn't this government taking the lead of other provinces such as Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia that has legislation regulating migrant workers?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As my colleague has just mentioned, this particular program is indeed a responsibility of the federal government; however, we do have labour standards in this Province that I am responsible for as the Minister Responsible for Labour. We take accusations such as the member presents on this floor of the House very seriously, and we follow up on all allegations that are presented.

I will let the member know that temporary foreign workers have the same rights in this Province as any worker from Newfoundland and Labrador who might be a permanent resident of this Province. Any time an allegation is made through Labour Standards that there has been a violation or some ill treatment of any nature whatsoever, we follow up on every single one of those investigations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I point out that a report card done by the UFCW has us showing very, very low when it comes to protection of these workers.

I ask the Premier: Will he see that the Labour Standards Act is amended to add provisions for the protection of temporary foreign workers, as happens in other provinces?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we review our labour legislation very regularly, the same as we do with all legislation in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. If we find there is an opportunity or a need to amend the legislation then we are certainly open to that. With respect to the issue at hand today and the allegations the member is sharing on this House floor today, there is nothing in the legislation that does not give us the ability to follow up on any suggestion that workers are being ill-treated – and that is being done.

I reassure members of this House, that if there is any allegation or suggestion by a worker that their rights are being violated under the Labour Standards Act, if they are working in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, whether they are from here or whether they are permanent residents or not, they have the same rights as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and it will be investigated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Residential Tenancy Act consultations were completed in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: When is he going to release the report with all of its recommendations?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, there has been a great body of work done with regard to that legislative review. We have had some consultations. That is online, what we heard.

That is available for the public to see. We are also looking at other jurisdictions and seeing what they are doing with regard to how they are progressing in the future, Mr. Speaker.

We are also looking at minimal housing standards, and that is being looked at as well in other jurisdictions. I know that has been in the media for the last little as well. So, we are still moving forward. There is still some work to do, Mr. Speaker, and when we are ready we certainly will be bringing it to the floor of the House. I am looking forward to that day, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of a housing crisis and we need the recommendations from that consultation, which were completed a year and a half ago.

Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador housing and homelessness research report was completed in October, 2013.

I ask the minister: When is he going to release that?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

That report was only shared with me recently. It is under review, and I should have that released within the next couple of weeks or so, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: When is he going to develop an overall comprehensive housing policy to address the growing housing crisis, one that would include

such initiatives as tax initiatives for builders and the use of surplus provincial properties, including land, buildings and more, a real comprehensive housing policy for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is engaged for a number of years now in regard to affordable housing in Newfoundland and Labrador. We address that issue under a various number of programs. Number one, the IAH program, which has built a number of units right across Newfoundland and Labrador, over 100 units that are all in the affordable housing portfolio; as well as the Provincial Home Repair Program, the Home Modification Program, and all those particular programs.

We continue to invest over a lot of programs in areas that would make affordable housing accessible to the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: When will he take leadership and freeze all surplus provincial properties until he comes up with a housing policy to address the growing housing crisis?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills for a quick response.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, I am shocked to hear the hon. member is against development in Newfoundland and Labrador and free enterprise. I will be quite honest with you. Through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, we have

invested heavily over the last number of years in regard to the most vulnerable people in our –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

I move the following private member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's decision to introduce full-day kindergarten.

This is seconded by the Member for Port de Grave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I serve notice that the motion just presented to the House by the Member for Terra Nova will be the private member's motion to be debated this coming Wednesday, Private Members' Day.

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

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. LANE: 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 there is a waste recovery facility being proposed by Eastern Waste Management in the Peak Pond-Reids Pond area; and

WHEREAS such a site will drastically impact the pond and general area in a negative way from an environmental perspective; and

WHEREAS there are many species of wildlife that will be negatively impacted by such a site, such as rabbits, moose, ducks, loons, Canada geese, et cetera; and

WHEREAS such a site will result in litter and strong odours in the general area; and

WHEREAS there are a significant number of cabins and permanent homes in the Peak Pond-Reids Pond area, which will be negatively impacted by this site; and

WHEREAS Eastern Waste Management has many sites available to them for such a facility including former dump sites in the area;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to intercede in the matter and advise Eastern Waste Management to withdraw this proposal and find a more suitable location for this waste recovery facility.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will every pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is, yes, another petition. I have had several. I have several more to come. This time we have people from Carbonear,

Blaketown, South Dildo, Whitbourne area, Long Cove, and so on. This is in addition to the many people who actually own properties in Peak Pond-Reids Pond.

Like I said, we are also seeing people from the general area who have a number of concerns about this particular site. Mr. Speaker, as is indicated in this petition, there are certainly much more suitable sites available to Eastern Waste Management, particularly former dump sites in the area, former industrial sites where this could go. It makes no sense whatsoever to destroy a beautiful pristine area, such as what has been chosen here, when there are other sites that could be used which are much more suitable.

Again, on behalf of the residents, cabin owners of this particular area –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: – as well as other people in that general area, I present this petition once again today, and I will keep doing so until the government intercedes and withdraws this application and finds a more suitable location.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS provincial funding and support for an arm's-length advocacy group is needed in order to promote, protect, and ensure full citizenship rights for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with disabilities; and

WHEREAS the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities (COD-NL) has advocated for persons with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador for nearly thirty-five years; and

WHEREAS people with disabilities across the Province rely on COD-NL to navigate and access support services, educate the public, and provide outreach; and

WHEREAS long-term sustainable funding for COD-NL should be a key building block in the Province's strategy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS federal and provincial funding cuts continue to threaten COD-NL's capacity to provide important advocacy, public education, and outreach activities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate funding cut from the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, Newfoundland and Labrador, in 2013 and provide a long-term sustainable funding arrangement for COD-NL.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I think sometimes because COD-NL is headquartered here in the City of St. John's, in the capital, people often think that this issue is an issue that does not affect all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I think the fact that we have petitioners here from Norris Point and Rocky Harbour up on the Great Northern Peninsula, really is indicative of the fact that COD-NL is an organization that serves people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and provides an important service, an advocacy service, an education service that everyone in the Province can benefit from.

Recently, there was a press release that went out which indicated government was partnering with COD-NL on a particular initiative. I think that is a good thing. I think when the private sector, when other organizations in the public sector can partner with COD-NL and avail of the information they have, the advocacy services

they have, their long history of advocacy for persons with disabilities in the Province, that is a positive thing.

I think we really need to go back and look at what government decided to do with respect to their funding last year and how all of that really rolls up against what is going on the federal side because the federal government wants to wash their hands of organizations like COD-NL and we really need to see what the impact of that is going to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand here today, again, Mr. Speaker, to present a petition on behalf of the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador.

WHEREAS we wish to raise concern regarding the recent delay of the construction of the new hospital in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to the planning and construction of a new hospital in Corner Brook as previously committed to and in a timely manner as originally announced without further delays or changes.

Mr. Speaker, this is probably about ten or fifteen petitions I have presented, and I will be presenting more in the near future. I have over 4,000 names of people on petitions, Mr. Speaker, who signed the petitions to get the hospital in Corner Brook. Stop with the promises and start with the construction, to ensure we have the proper information and that we make a decision.

I was asked to inform the Member for Humber West and the Member for Humber East, who is the Premier, there will be a meeting on April 24

of the health care action committee. They will show up and show support for this action committee, Mr. Speaker. I know members opposite on this side will be attending the meeting.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, and the people of Western Newfoundland who I am speaking to, is that the Premier committed \$500,000 to do a study. We are not sure what the study is for. We are not sure what new information will be found.

We assume – and I as a person from the West Coast as an ordinary citizen, I assume the information that the Department of Health and Community Services is presenting to the people in Western Newfoundland is accurate. It is true. It is information that you can say we went out and we did our review, we did our studies. We had professionals.

I ask again, and I asked the government, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of people are saying: What is this \$500,000 for? It is the information that the Department of Health is giving out and trying to get to the action committee, getting to the city council, getting to private groups in closed meetings, I might add, will not have a public meeting. It is disgraceful, Mr. Speaker.

People are asking, what is the \$500,000 for? Will we ever get a copy of the terms of reference? Will we ever get the results of it? Mr. Speaker, once again, \$500,000 to find information that the Minister of Health is already telling people in Corner Brook. The question is, is the information accurate? If you are spending \$500,000 to seek out the information, why was there ever a decision made not to put a radiation unit, not to put a PET scanner there until we have the full information?

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank you again for the opportunity. I will be presenting more. April 24, to the Members for Humber East and Humber West.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you very much, 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 the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive approach to domestic violence in a court setting that fully understood and dealt with the complex issues of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS domestic violence continues to be one of the most serious issues facing our Province today and the cost of the impact of domestic violence is great both economically and in human suffering; and

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court was welcomed and endorsed by all aspects of the justice system including the police, the courts, prosecutors, defence counsel, Child, Youth and Family Services, as well as victims, offenders, community agencies, and women's groups; and

WHEREAS the recidivism rate for offenders going through the court was 10 per cent compared to 40 per cent for those who did not; and

WHEREAS the budget for the Court was only 0.2 per cent of the entire budget of the Department of Justice;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, here I am once again standing up to speak on behalf of people across the Province who are still mystified as to why the Family Violence Intervention Court has been closed. It is interesting to hear my colleague, the member, talk about the \$500,000 that all of a sudden has appeared to do the study on the Corner Brook hospital and whether or not radiation services are needed.

I spent a lot of time this weekend knocking on doors, and I do not know how many people said to me: Keep up the work on the Family Violence Intervention Court, it is such an important program. Keep pushing and keep fighting for it on our behalf. These are people who worked in the court. These are people who work in the area of violence against women and children, who know how effective this program was, who know how effective the court actually was.

Mr. Speaker, in a press release issued by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the former one who is now our Minister of Finance, issued it on November 20, 2013. She said, "The Provincial Government remains firmly committed to preventing violence against those most at risk of experiencing violence, including women, children and families."

She ends up by saying, "All individuals in our province must remain strongly committed to preventing violence and creating a society where all residents can live, work and learn in communities where violence is considered unacceptable."

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the type of work that the Family Violence Intervention Court has been doing. It took a while for all the stakeholders to buy into the court, to realize how the court worked, and they did and the court was working. Mr. Speaker, the court needs to be reinstated, that is all there is to it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS we wish to raise concern regarding the recent delay on the construction of the new hospital in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to the planning and construction of a new hospital in Corner Brook as previously committed to and in a timely manner as originally announced without further delay or changes.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition from a number of people generally in the Corner Brook area, the Pinchgut Lake area, and the Massey Drive area. They also want me to advise the Minister of Health and her Parliamentary Secretary, the Member for Terra Nova, there is a meeting on April 24 and they would really like for both of those members to attend to become fully apprised of all the concerns surrounding the delays in the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, health care consumes the largest percentage of our Budget in this Province and in every province of Canada. For sure that demonstrates health care is extremely important. Health care is one of the most important items a government can manage and can provide to its residents and to its citizens. Part of health care is a hospital.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when the old Western Memorial Hospital was being built. I used to walk right past the construction site on my way to junior high school. That was over forty years ago. That hospital is used up and it stood the test of time. A determination has been made, shared in and agreement upon by government, that a new hospital is required.

Mr. Speaker, how complicated can it be to build a hospital? A hospital is not a new invention. They have been around for thousands of years. Hospitals are being built all over North America. We know the population. The government claims the population is not expanding; consequently, it should be fairly easy to get a precise number of people who would use the hospital because the hospital has been there for a long time.

Why the delay? Why the delay in this hospital? The government acknowledges it is needed. It has committed and committed and committed. I think I could go nineteen times, if *The Telegram* is accurate. Nineteen times there has been an announcement, I think I read in the newspaper, regarding this hospital over the years. How complicated can it be?

Mr. Speaker, the government really needs to leave the drawing board and get into the workplace. Let us get moving on this hospital.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the current road conditions of Route 437 are deplorable; and

WHEREAS Route 437 to Ship Cove and Cape Onion was first paved in 1990-1991 and is now riddled with potholes, cracks, bumps, and erosion, similarly the road the Raleigh is in poor condition; and

WHEREAS business operations will suffer in these communities that include Pistolet Bay Provincial Park, Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve, Tickle Inn, Raleigh Historical Society Fishing

Village, carving shop, boat tour, restaurant, cottages, convenience, gas station, walking trails, museum, and numerous fishing enterprises, among other natural attractions; and

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

WHEREAS an improved paved road would enhance local business, fish processing operations and tourism, which is vital to the health of the communities affected;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to allocate funds to resurface Route 437.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a first time I presented such a petition on behalf residents, basically, in Raleigh, Ship Cove, and Cape Onion. I have had the opportunity to meet with the local service district there in Ship Cove, and also the Town of Raleigh. Certainly, driving over road, especially to Ship Cove, it is a continuous bump – drive, bump; drive, bump; drive, bump; and that is a regular process. In the community itself you could almost get lost in the pot holes that are there.

Mr. Speaker, it has been close to twenty-five years, and maybe it is time that there is some maintenance work directed towards Route 437. On behalf of the petitioners, I present this petition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS until 2013, calcium was applied to provincially owned gravel roads in and around communities to suppress dust; and

WHEREAS dust suppression is very helpful for residents experiencing health conditions like asthma and allergies; and

WHEREAS the cost of administrating the calcium program is very affordable to government; and

WHEREAS dust suppression is an effective way of improving safety for the travelling public;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, beginning in 2014, to reinstate the calcium application program on provincially owned gravel roads in and around communities.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, while I was home on the weekend, that is a petition that was handed to me by the residents. I stood a number of times last fall on the calcium issue, and I will continue, because now we are into spring and we are soon going to have the dust problem again.

Mr. Speaker, every day people get up on petitions, and lots of times we are petitioning on the same things: cell service, broadband, and bad roads seems to be a problem everywhere. Mr. Speaker, I do not hear any of the other forty-seven members in this House calling for dust control. So that just tells me how bad the conditions are in the district that I represent. It is really, really infuriating. I have met with the minister a number of times. We have ferry issues that cannot be fixed overnight. We have been struggling with that all of this year; it has been a terrible year. We have an atrocious road that we drive on. The pavement was announced. We still have five or six years.

Calcium went in through the main road on each of the communities and it made a huge

difference to the quality of life for those residents, Mr. Speaker. My colleague for Burgeo – La Poile has been talking about diabetes today. I have had many seniors say to me last summer: My dear, I cannot get out for a walk any more. Just such a small thing that would have such far-reaching benefits, it would help with supporting this healthy living, increase the quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget came down, it talked about shared prosperity and a fair society. I can tell you when I have to stand here and ask for a little bit of money to be put back to keep the dust down, we do not care if it is calcium, we do not care what it is as long as we have the dust control. There are a lot of people in my district who do not feel that we live in a fair society, I can tell you that.

I urge the minister to do the right thing. A couple of things I have heard him say, one was that it could be an environmental issue. That is why I say look at something else. Most recently I heard that perhaps the truck is no longer able to accommodate what they need to put the calcium out. If there is a will, my grandmother used to say, there is a way. I urge the minister –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I have a petition to the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled:

WHEREAS residents of the Southwest Coast must travel the TCH between Channel-Port aux Basques and Corner Brook for work, medical, educational, and social reasons; and

WHEREAS the Marine Atlantic ferries dock at Channel-Port aux Basques at various hours on a daily basis resulting in extremely high volume of commercial and residential travellers using this section of the TCH; and

WHEREAS the world-renowned Wreckhouse area is situated along this section of the TCH; and

WHEREAS the government initiated the twenty-four hour snow clearing project in 2008 that excluded the section between Channel-Port aux Basques and Stephenville;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to include the section of the TCH from Channel-Port aux Basques to Stephenville in the twenty-four hour snow clearing project.

Mr. Speaker, obviously this is a petition I have entered on numerous occasions in this House. I will continue to do so until government makes the right decision; however, I stand today with a letter of support that I received from the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association that has written to the minister and indicated their support for this initiative. I have a letter here that was sent to the minister and I was cc'ed on.

The Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association represents the commercial trucking industry in Atlantic Canada with over 325 members from all four provinces. This is a group that represents just about all the commercial traffic, which makes up a large portion of the vehicles coming off the ferry and travelling across and back and forth this Province. For this group to indicate their support for this was seen to give it some more strength. I am glad to hear they have supported our call to include this section of the roadway.

Again, I am not speaking just on behalf of my constituents. I am speaking on behalf of constituents in the district next to me. I am speaking on behalf of the truckers who are going across this road. They should have the same service they get elsewhere when they are going across this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand here today and enter this again. I look forward to continuing to call to make the right decision here when it comes to twenty-four hour snow clearing.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I go to Order 2, third reading of a bill. I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that Bill 3, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009, be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009. (Bill 3)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill is now read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 3)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now I would like to move to Order 3, third reading. I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, that Bill 10, An Act To Amend The Buildings Accessibility Act, be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the bill now be read a third time.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Buildings Accessibility Act. (Bill 10)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill is now read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Buildings Accessibility Act", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 10)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this point, I would like to call from the Order Paper Motion 1. I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am happy to be able to rise at last in my turn to address the Budget for 2014-2015, a Budget that came into the House, I think, on March 27. I find it extremely interesting that in this year's Budget, in the Budget Speech, and in comments that have been made by the minister and by the Premier since the Budget was first brought down, that the government has chosen to use the

language of social justice. I noticed they have even put out definitions of social justice in the speech itself, if I remember correctly, in the Speech from the Throne and in comments that have been made here in the House.

It is a very important concept. It is certainly one which I have believed all my life, the concept of social justice; but the term is not something that one can put on and taken off at will. One year a Budget is a Budget based on social justice and another year a Budget is based on tearing apart the programs and the very structure of what our society, our community, may be built on.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, we had a Budget that was pretty brutal. It was a Budget that took away jobs from people in this Province, that took away programs that people in the Province had been depending on, that took away structures even that communities have been depending on for years; and did it at a time, not when we were a Province in dire straits, not when we were a Province who did not know where the next cent was coming from, but a Province that now has an \$8 billion Budget, a Province that has money has we have never had it before in terms of revenue.

It was at a time like that, that the government brought in a Budget that really made people suffer, and people are still suffering from that Budget, Mr. Speaker. Yet, this government can turn around this year and say oh, this year we believe in social justice, and this year we have a Budget that is going to be a Budget that will cause equality for people. This year is a year that we are going to show people that we care. So we are supposed to forget and people are supposed to forget that they did not care last year but they are caring this year.

Was it social justice to have all of those layoffs, Mr. Speaker? All the layoffs that happened, we are told in excess of 1,500 people lost their jobs, and we found out that many of the decisions that were made by this government in that Budget were decisions not based on solid analysis, not based on a reality inside of the departments. We did not have departments that were swollen with numbers of people lying around doing nothing.

They certainly found that out in the Sheriff's Office, Mr. Speaker. This government this year in its Budget tried to undo what it did last year, which was almost destroy the whole structure of the Sheriff's Office and the role that it plays in our justice system – if we want to use the word justice.

The same way, Mr. Speaker, with the Department of Justice, with the Crown prosecutors; again, we were not talking about a system that was swollen with people with nothing to do. What did they have to do days after the Budget came down last year? They had to reverse decisions, decisions that were not based on analysis, that were not based on reality, that were knee-jerk reactions, and they had to turn them around.

It was a Budget last year that did not care about the impact on young workers in the public service sector, young workers who lost their jobs because of the layoffs. We have now, Mr. Speaker, a public service sector that has a real disruption in the continuity of the public service sector, a disruption in the knowledge that exists in the public service sector because of the loss of the jobs last year.

Was that social justice, Mr. Speaker? Was that an act that really was for the good of people in the public service sector? Was it a decision that was good for the people in the community? No, Mr. Speaker, it was not.

Let us look at another decision in last year's Budget, and that was the decision to privatize Adult Basic Education. Was that social justice, Mr. Speaker, when we had communities that had wonderful centres in them that were based in the community who were offering the ABE program, who were offering employment programs, who knew closely the people in their community who were vulnerable, who needed literacy programs, who had disabilities, who had lost jobs in their communities and the centres in those communities were able to work with people to ensure that they could get the education that they need to better themselves to move forward?

Those communities lost those centres. Those communities lost their programs, whether the programs were being offered from the not-for-profit community groups or being offered by our public college system, these were programs that were rooted in the community.

Was that social justice, Mr. Speaker, taking that program away from the communities of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, taking that program away from people who needed it most? So much for social justice in last year's Budget, Mr. Speaker, but this year they can say: Oh, now we believe in social justice. Wonderful!

The school board reorganization, Mr. Speaker, no discussion, no debate. None of us even knew there was an inkling this was coming. All of a sudden in last year's Budget, we have this big decision for one school board without any sense of what that is going to mean for people who are at the heart of that school board. We were already having decisions being made that were not good decisions for individual communities.

People on the tip of the Northern Peninsula were thinking that the board in Corner Brook really did not understand what it meant for them to lose a school up on the tip of the Northern Peninsula and the school board in Corner Brook did not. What is going to happen now when we have one school board down here on the Avalon Peninsula in charge of everything under English language education in this Province? Where is the social justice there, Mr. Speaker?

Are we seeing that there is equity in our system here in this Province? Are we seeing really that people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador have equal access, have equal opportunities, that people in, for example, St. John's or Corner Brook have? Is that social justice? No, Mr. Speaker. What social justice means is nobody being left behind and programs being planned in a way that those most in need get what they need in order to bring them up to a level of what maybe another community has that they do not have. That is social justice, Mr. Speaker, not making these blanket decisions that take things away from people.

Let's look at another one, Mr. Speaker, the Family Violence Intervention Court. Was it social justice to close down that court? I do not think so, Mr. Speaker. Once again, it was a program that was essential for a smaller group of people in our community, smaller in one way, not so small in another.

This was a program, Mr. Speaker, that was devoted to helping families in which there was violence, most often violence by men against their wives or their partners and/or their children. It was an intervention court that was going to benefit everybody, and it did. It benefited, in most cases, the mother and her children and it also benefited the abuser.

It was a court that was proven it was working. There was a report done that, as far as we know – because we only have copies of it, we do not have anything official from this government – and from what was told us by everybody who was part of that program, it was working and it was proven to be something that could lower domestic violence in our Province.

It was a program that was so good that Nova Scotia, for example, Mr. Speaker, decided it was a real model and they have started family intervention courts based on the model we used to have here. This government dares to say that it believes in social justice.

This year they think they can take a few things and throw them into the basket, and say: We believe in social justice. We believe in social justice because this year we are going to start reducing the small business tax, which the NDP had in its platform in 2011.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS MICHAEL: We will start reducing that tax. We are going to bring it down 1 per cent. That is social justice.

They also have brought in, Mr. Speaker – well, they brought this in before. You have a small increase every year for Income Support rates, and they are saying that is social justice because we have a small increase based on the cost of

living. This is social justice; aren't we wonderful?

Well, when they had a report put in their hands some years ago, a report that said the Income Support has to bring people up to a level where they are no longer living in poverty and then every year after that you do a cost-of-living increase, they forgot that first recommendation, Mr. Speaker. They took a level of Income Support that is a poverty level and every year they do a bit of an increase on that poverty level. Because that poverty level began where it began, you can do your little increases every year, it is still always going to be a poverty-level existence. That is social justice, Mr. Speaker. I cannot believe they have the gall to even use the terminology.

The same way with testing newborn children for cystic fibrosis, they called this social justice. It is, but there are so many other things they do not do for people when it comes to our health care system. What is wrong with their picture of social justice is that they do not understand that it is a mentality. It is the way you look at every decision that you make. It is not cherry-picking. It is not choosing something here and choosing something there and saying oh, we know the NDP is calling for this and people seem to be responding positively.

Let's put that in this year. Let's put that in because it looks like that is what people want. Let's put in full-day kindergarten, but forget about an early childhood strategy plan. That is what they miss, is the broad picture. They are not saying, for example, let's look at child care. They are not giving us what they have always said they were going to give us, an early childhood education plan. Then you would see a child care program. Then you would see full-day kindergarten part of a full vision that starts with the child at six months and brings a child right up to Grade 12.

Early childhood education is not just having all-day kindergarten, but they cherry-pick. They cherry-picked. They chose that one because it was always in their plan. They have been planning it for years. I know the department has

plans on the board and have had that plan there for a long time.

They finally decide, okay, let's do it now. We are ready to do it now. Not because they should be doing it, not because this is a piece of early childhood education, but how are we going to have things in the Budget that is going to get us re-elected in the general election. That is their social justice. That is what social justice is to them. How are we going to get ourselves re-elected?

The same way with the student loan system. I am delighted we have the all-day kindergarten. I still think we could have started some of that in September of this year. I have spoken to experts and those in the know who say we could have started that in some of the schools this year. I am also delighted the student loan system has changed and that we have grants, which is something we as a party have been calling for more than ten years, Mr. Speaker.

Again, they cherry-pick. They say, oh, this one is going to be good. We are going to get the young people on this. The people in post-secondary education are going to love this. We are going to get our votes from them, Mr. Speaker. They have the gall to do it and not recognize that they are not the only people in the Province who have stood for this.

They have no idea of what it means when they say they believe in social justice. They believe in doing what is going to get them elected, Mr. Speaker. That is what they believe in: what is going to get them elected. If they had a real vision for social justice, then we would not see what is happening in this Province right now.

The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and they do not want to hear it. They use statistics to try to deny the reality of what is going in this Province. The gap between rich and poor is growing. That is the reality.

There is an interesting comment from a report entitled, *Inequality Rising Faster than Ever*, and this comes from an internationally renowned organization, the Organization for Economic

Co-operation and Development, the OECD. The OECD says, "We're not experiencing a recession for the rich, only a recession for the rest." That was an interesting comment when they made it, and that is what is going on in this Province right now in turning it around. We are not experiencing growth for everybody. We are experiencing growth for the rich; we are not experiencing it for the rest. That is the message, Mr. Speaker, that I keep getting.

If we really believe in social justice, then we do our planning based on the rest of us, the rest of the people, those for whom the economic system is not working, and we do not do it by a tidbit here and a tidbit there. We put programs in place, plans in place, that show we really understand how to make our economic system work for everybody so that nobody gets left behind, Mr. Speaker. We have people right, left, and centre in this Province being left behind. Senior citizens who cannot afford to both pay for their food, heat their homes, and pay for their medication. Senior citizens chewing ice cubes when they are hungry to fool their stomachs. That is the kind of thing we have going on.

We have people in this Province who cannot find places to live who, on a regular basis, in the night, on weekends, during our workdays, at all times, making phone calls to us because they do not have adequate housing. They call us crying. I cannot understand how they can continue talking the way they are, Mr. Speaker, on the other side of the House; because if we are getting these phone calls from people, surely they are getting them as well. So, do they not hear those pleas when people call on the phone and cry because they literally do not know what they are going to do?

Like the mother of an autistic child who had to give up her home and move in with her parents because she could not afford to be able to take care of her child. She could not afford to take care of her child; her housing was too expensive. She had to give up her home and move in with her parents in order to take care of an autistic child. That is social justice, Mr. Speaker? They keep denying the reality of what we see in this Province. They keep acting as if what we are

seeing, they do not see, but they have a way of being able to close their eyes to it.

I cannot close my eyes to the reality of what I see. If you believe in social justice, you cannot close your eyes to the reality of what you see. If you believe in social justice, you have to recognize everything that is going on in society and you say: How do we put something in place that takes care of everybody? That the rest of us are taken care of, that they are not people left behind, that there are not people going to bed at night hungry because they cannot afford to buy food and heat their homes at the same time. That is why there is not a community in this Province now where you go where you cannot find food banks; some smaller, some larger depending on the community. They are everywhere in our Province, Mr. Speaker, because everywhere in our Province people are being left behind.

Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to speak to the Budget. I am delighted to have had this first opportunity, and I look forward to my other opportunities as the debate continues.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a tremendous honour to take my place in this House of Assembly as the Member for the great District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the hon. members of this House and address the constituents who, through their efforts, have brought me here today.

I will take a moment to offer thanks and best wishes to my predecessors, the former Members of Carbonear – Harbour Grace: Mr. Jerome Kennedy, as well as Mr. Art Reid and Mr. George Sweeney. I would also like to

acknowledge Mr. George Clarke, a native from Crocker's Cove, Carbonear who served in this Legislature for sixteen years. He was one of the longest-serving Speakers of the House, having served in that position for ten years.

Public service is no small feat and those who take on these rewarding yet challenging roles should be commended, no matter what political corner they chose to do their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for the support, kindness, and trust shown during my recent election. I thank all those who assisted, have brought me here today, particularly the dedicated campaign team of volunteers, including my family and friends.

For the ultimate vote of confidence in my by-election of November 26, 2013, I offer profound thanks to the people of the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SLADE: Let there be no mistake, their vote created a strong bond between the people of the district and myself, and I intend to honour it each and every day while I am given this duty to represent them in government and in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the people and the communities of the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace are very near and dear to my heart and soul. I have served them as a councillor, deputy mayor, and the Mayor of the community of Carbonear for many years. I intend, with the best of my intentions and good will, to serve their purpose and their platform – the people's purpose and platform – hopefully, for many years to come.

The District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace is a mixture of towns, communities, and bays that are bound together by many shared links, issues, and values. Our past reaches back some 500 years when our Island was known as land of the fish and cod was truly king, and even currency.

Our region had thriving fishing communities even before settlements and livyers set up full-

time residence. Our rich story includes the legacy of sailors and pirates like Peter Easton and the Irish princess he allegedly rescued by the name of Sheila NaGeira. Since then, we have had many other brave daredevils and pioneers, some infamous, some not recognized, and some very famous like Amelia Earhart, an American aviator pioneer who, as many of you will know, was the first female pilot to fly solo across the North Atlantic.

In the district, we have borne witness to colonies being established, wars upon our shores, international ports of trade created, violent political and religious riots taking place, and the Royal Canadian Navy operations carried out. Yet, the communities in the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace are still standing to tell the tale – and what a fantastic tale of history we have for the residents and tourists who visit our communities.

In addition to the above historical notables, we have historic places still standing, like the Harbour Grace Courthouse, which was constructed in 1830. Three of the oldest stone churches in the Province are also within our district: St. Paul's Anglican Church, Immaculate Conception in Harbour Grace, and St. Patrick's in Carbonear. We have the historic Mosquito wooden schoolhouse in Bristol's Hope, one of the last of its kind.

Historic Carbonear Island serves as a strategic place and a chapter in our provincial history. During the Battle of Carbonear in which the French led the attack on the community, the residents retreated to the island. They were successful in defending the island from capture. It became known for a time as the Gibraltar of Newfoundland.

Centuries later, in 1992 and in 2012, Carbonear hosted the summer games. As a result, the district can now boast about rubberized walking tracks, excellent ball fields, and tennis courts. There is also an outdoor concert venue known as Paddy's Garden, as well as a downtown heritage area.

This is not a well-known fact, Mr. Speaker, but there was a prisoner-of-war camp built during the Second World War in Victoria. It was the only prisoner-of-war camp built in Newfoundland and Labrador, but it was never occupied because when the United States came into the war, they did not want prisoners near their bases in the Province. Today, a unique and early heritage park sits on that same site, completed with a period saltbox house, a general store, a period church, a forge, and a water-operated sawmill. Victoria is also home to the second-oldest power plant built in 1904. It is still operating today as efficiently as it was when it was built.

I want to thank my wife Beverly, my three children, and seven grandchildren who stood by me and supported me throughout my campaign, and continue that support. I would also like to thank my brother and four sisters who stood by me. As well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my late parents who taught me the values of life and never missed an opportunity to help and support my fellow citizens, which is the very reason I offer myself for public life and why I am here today.

Mr. Speaker, it has been over three months since I officially assumed the role of MHA for the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace on December 11, 2013. We all come to our seats through different paths, some as lawyers, some as teachers, and many of us from a variety of other lines of work. By trade and true grit, I am a fisherman, a fish harvester, an entrepreneur as they would like to call us now, and very proud to call myself one.

As we row the great and mighty ship called Newfoundland and Labrador, we will each have different lights to guide us. My guiding force will be the people of the district who I have the pleasure to represent, their issues, their concerns, their worries, their challenges, and most importantly, their solutions, as well as their visions and hope for the future. Mr. Speaker, this is a people's government and a people's house, and we must be vigilant in being responsive to this very simple truth.

Mr. Speaker, as I have stated, I have been a municipal leader for over twenty years. During that time, I have become personally familiar with the challenges facing municipalities as I have seen it first-hand and the difficulties and joys of running a community. I want to continue to fight for infrastructure such as clean and safe drinking water, proper water and sewer, as well as safe highways and roads. I will also press for better education and facilities, including post-secondary education, as well as shorter wait times and more efficient delivery in our health care system.

I remain firm in my deep belief in both rural Newfoundland and Labrador and in the fishery. As a fisherman and a vessel owner, there are many rough waters to navigate. I still stand ready to fight tooth and nail for our small rural communities. This can only occur if we are vigilant, if we have enough people fighting the good fight, if we have leaders who control our resources willing to listen and be committed.

We cannot again allow greed to govern how we harvest our resources. It must be done for the benefit of all and not just a few. It must be done sustainably, sensibly, and it must be done in collaboration with all stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, I am a firm believer in joint management of our fisheries with all stakeholders, and especially with the federal government. As a Province, we have been seeking joint management since Newfoundland joined Confederation sixty-five years ago. Now is the time to have that conversation again, but we must make this a means to an end to finally get the respect we all deserve when it comes to our fishery resources.

Incredibly, our fishery is managed by people thousands of miles away. People who may not be familiar with our fishing communities, people who have not walked on our wharves or even had a regular conversation with our fishermen. As well intentioned as they may be, these people cannot do the job.

Let us draw ourselves a map of a path we wish to travel. It must begin now, it must be a

priority, and it must begin with us. Effective management of our fisheries resource should be left in the hands of those who are most familiar with the daily operations and what the fishery really means to the people on the front lines.

While there may be a collaborative role by our federal counterparts, the reality is and the real answer needs to come from those who are closest to the resource. Joint management of fisheries and aquaculture is a key to ensuring longevity and future growth.

Mr. Speaker, I may be only in this role officially for four months but I have been familiar with the issues affecting the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace my entire life. Carbonear is my home, and for the past twenty years I have taken every phone call, read every letter, and spoke to as many people as I can in the region on what bothers them.

This is a flourishing and successful region. For everything that represents a challenge, there are also many things that can speak of success of a district. Mr. Speaker, the district boasts a modern, regional hospital; long-term health care facilities; modern schools; modern shopping facilities; great recreational and sporting facilities, such as the swimming pool in Carbonear and the stadium in Harbour Grace. This area is commonly referred to as the Hub of the Bay.

In Harbour Grace is a plane called the *Spirit of Harbour Grace*. This tourist attraction stands in recognition of contribution of the town to early flight. I think it also could very well symbolize the tremendous spirit of bravery and endurance not just within the people and the communities, bays, and inlets of the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace, but in the whole of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am humbled today that those same people have put their faith in me in conveying the spirit and the wishes of the people in the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace. This is a commitment I promise to keep, a pledge that I make today to those who elected me and to all people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I am known, among many infamous deeds, as being the last person to lock the doors of the Carbonear train station when it went out of service. One thing I can promise you: I will not be locking any doors on democracy or on my constituents; their needs are my needs. I intend to be part of a team that reopens a new way forward to our Province.

Mr. Speaker, achievement is only possible where there is action. We have to be agents of change that we would like to see in our districts, our Province, our country and indeed this world. That is why I am here in the people's House. I have pledged to the people of the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace that there will be change in how we are represented. I do not take their support for granted; they have given me their confidence, and I respectfully seek to deliver on everything I have committed to.

Mr. Speaker, as every member in this House today can attest, we are all given a great privilege of standing in this Legislature to reach each and every resident of our Province. As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians we are strong, confident, and fearless people.

It is my honour to be entrusted with the concerns and triumphs of residents in the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace. It is a responsibility I do not take lightly. I want to light some fires to start change in my district in the fishery and in the Province as a whole, because as Martin Luther King Junior once said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege of addressing this House today. I look forward, in the years ahead, as we work together for the people who have put faith and trust into us. Indeed, I dedicate this speech to the warm and wonderful people in the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bonavista South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a privilege and I am delighted to be able to rise in this House today to speak on Budget 2014. I would like to commend the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace on his maiden speech. I would like to say that all members in the House of Assembly are here to work hard and to act on behalf of our constituents and the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

At this time, I feel it is fitting to actually have some discussions around and talk around the issue of health care services in Budget 2014. It is very important. A \$3 billion investment advances health care for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Accessible health care remains a priority for the provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. With an investment of \$3 billion in Budget 2014, this is certainly going to help ensure better, improved health care and better value for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We are listening to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and focusing on areas we know will mean the most to them and their families. This government continues to provide accessible health care for families and communities throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Budget 2014 is all about shared prosperity, fair society, and a balanced approach. This government recognizes that and will continue to focus our attention on being fair to all people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In the recent Budget, there was an announcement that was very important to the District of Bonavista South and important to communities on the tip of the Bonavista Peninsula: a \$1.5 million investment for dialysis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I can say that with all certainty based on the fact that I have attended a number of functions in the District of Bonavista South the past couple of weekends. Everywhere I go, people are actually talking about the importance of these dialysis services to the communities on the tip of the Bonavista Peninsula.

I would like to take the opportunity to commend the Minister of Finance, Premier Marshall, the Cabinet ministers, the Department of Health and Community Services, and community groups and organizations in the Bonavista area who actually lobbied government on numerous occasions for this important service.

I commend the dialysis committee, community councils, and leaders in the communities as well. This was a joint effort by all people involved. Everybody is to be commended on doing such an outstanding job. This government, in particular, and Cabinet listened to the people in that part of the region of Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, I send out my gratitude to all people involved. It was a joint effort and we did listen to the people and we will listen to the people in the future.

This service will provide a better quality of life to people who are affected by dialysis. This service will allow people to stay closer to home to have an important service like this. This service was a number one priority for the people in the District of Bonavista South. This government listened loud and clear and acted on the request of the people of the District of Bonavista South, Mr. Speaker.

As we continue to focus our attention on the needs of the people in health care and the people who are working in health care, we did make a number of investments, and we do recognize the importance of all people who work in health care. This government recognized that nurses are important members of the health care professional team in hospitals, health care centres, and communities throughout this Province. That is why 32 per cent of the number of new health and community services positions added in Budget 2014 is nursing positions, Mr. Speaker.

There is an investment of approximately millions of dollars that was invested in relation to putting professional people into our health care systems in Newfoundland and Labrador. Accessible health care remains a priority for the provincial government; 2014 will definitely ensure better health care services, better value for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We will continue to listen to what the people of our Province are saying in relation to such important issues as health care.

In relation to the announcement of \$500,000 towards the Bonavista Peninsula Health Centre to ensure that there will be improvements made to our local health care centre. That was another great announcement made in this Budget, Mr. Speaker.

This provincial government is providing significant funding for long-term care and community support services with an investment of \$61 million in new funding. This year, a total of \$695 million will be invested for the provision of long-term care and community services. That is a substantial amount of money, \$695 million.

Improving cancer treatment and care is a priority for this government; \$24 million to enhance the care and treatment of people with cancer. Bringing the total investment to \$172 million in cancer treatment and prevention since 2004; \$7.1 million for coverage of new drug therapies under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program, including drugs to assist in the treatment of cancer.

Budget 2014 provides investments to increase access and enhance long-term care, cancer treatment, and seniors programming, which provides significant infrastructure investment into the health care system. Investments will increase to access diagnostic and treatment services for children with autism and other developmental conditions, such as increased dialysis capacity; \$695 million is allocated in Budget 2014 to provide vital programming in long-term care and community services.

Budget 2014 includes over \$189 million in infrastructure; \$119 million for continuing construction and redevelopment; \$50.5 million for new equipment; and, \$20 million for repairs and renovations. This government continues to invest in the needs of the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are committed to all parts of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the urban areas, the rural areas, the major cities.

We are committed to Newfoundland and Labrador because this is a large geographical Province and we know the needs of the people all across this wonderful Province, and we will continue to listen to what the people are saying in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will continue to say that because the Opposition does not always listen. I will continue to preach and put the positive message out there about what this government continues to do on behalf of the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The people in my district are listening and really appreciate what this government is doing to the rural communities and the people who are affected in my district. They commend me on a number of bases. They have talked to me, they are listening. They are paying attention to what this government is doing and they will continue to support a government that is going to provide and help out the people in the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. The people are listening, they will continue to listen, and we are listening. Collaboratively, we can make a difference in the future needs of the people of this great Province.

Currently, we have 6,340 registered nurses in our Province. An increase from previous years, from 2,421. There are licensed practical nurses who are in health care providing a great service as well, and their numbers are equivalent. We have, as a government, recognized the significant contributions of all of our professional people in health care, and we will continue to do that as a government.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to supporting important

social programs, strong communities, and the health and well-being of children, family and seniors. This government supports and helps people, the less vulnerable populations in our society, seniors and individuals with low incomes.

Budget 2014 includes approximately \$170 million for the Poverty Reduction Strategy to support the provincial government's long-term approach to the prevention, reduction and alleviation of poverty. This brings the total investment to reduce poverty to \$1 billion since 2006. I commend the people who work in Advanced Education and Skills, all department officials, and the Minister responsible for Advanced Education and Skills. They are doing such an outstanding job.

The Department of Finance announced Budget 2014 with an increase to all senior benefits. The maximum payment seniors will receive in 2014 will be the highest ever at \$1,036, up from \$971 in 2013. Effective for the 2014 taxation year, the low-income tax reduction, income thresholds will be increased eliminating the provincial income tax for individuals with a net income up to \$18,547 and for families with net income of up to \$31,362. This is a major improvement, Mr. Speaker, and certainly will assist a large number of people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This government also supports affordable housing and will address homelessness. Budget 2014 includes investments to support affordable housing through the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. The provincial government will again partner with the Government of Canada to extend the investments in the affordable housing agreement for an unprecedented amount for the next five years.

That amount, a \$68 million agreement, also extends the Provincial Home Repair Program and assists 2,100 households with low incomes to repair their homes. There is \$12 million over three years to extend the Residential Energy Efficiency Program to assist up to 1,000 low-income owners per year with energy retrofits.

That will significantly improve affordability by reducing heating costs. There is \$1 million to increase the Rent Supplement Program, bringing the current \$8 million annual allocation up to \$9 million.

The program supports individuals and families on low incomes and it will definitely help pay the portion of their rent that exceeds 25 per cent of their net household income directly to their landlord and assist Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to address its application list.

Five hundred thousand dollars in additional funding for the Supportive Living Program, for a total annual investment of \$5.3 million to address homelessness, Mr. Speaker. Nine million dollars over three years to extend the Home Modification Program to provide financial assistance to homeowners with disabilities or seniors with low to moderate incomes who require accessibility changes to their residence.

Those announcements that I am speaking on here today are announcements that affect and improve the quality of life of all seniors, and all people who meet the criteria right across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In my district in particular, there are people who talk to me on a regular basis and actually inquire about some of those programs. We put the information out there as the elected officials, and these people apply for those programs, and I must say, they are delighted in relation to what this government continues to do to improve the quality of life of the people of this great Province.

This government also supports persons with disabilities. Budget 2014 will include \$12.6 million to advance inclusion and support employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, Mr. Speaker. Now, this was a very important announcement, very important and will help a lot of people with disabilities. This government, again, is listening to different groups, different organizations, and we will continue to listen to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This government supports health and wellness. Budget 2014 health announcements – the provincial government is committed to improving the health and wellness of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2014 invests \$7.1 million to provide coverage for new therapies under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program, bringing the total investment in the program to \$147 million.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. LITTLE: One hundred and forty-seven million dollars, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Six point seven million dollars for the continuation of the Adult Dental Program, including increasing the cap for basic dental services from \$150 to \$200, Mr. Speaker. An investment of \$700,000 to extend drug card access from six months to one year for people living with low income under the Foundation Plan of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program.

Mr. Speaker, I can stand in this House with all certainty and speak on behalf of the people of the District of Bonavista South and the great people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I can say that this government continues to listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will act on what we commit to. This government has done this in the past and will continue to do this in the future.

I would like to commend all of my colleagues on this side of the House today, Mr. Speaker, who are doing such an outstanding job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Also, I have to say that every department official and every minister in Cabinet of this government, every time I actually went and had a discussion I always got treated with respect. I must commend the

people who actually lead this Province in positions.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. LITTLE: I would like to speak a little bit more in the future.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise here today and speak on Budget 2014. I, too, would like to commend the member opposite on his maiden speech here in the House today. It is a great privilege for us all to be here, Mr. Speaker, and advocate on behalf of the needs of our constituents.

That is why for me, in particular, Budget 2014 is an outstanding Budget because we have delivered on our commitment to the people of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune for road repairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I have had a lot of challenges in my district and continue to have challenges in my district. Roads, in particular, have been one of the biggest. The political life of all of my successors is going to be so much easier because I am going to have the big part – the bulk of the work is going to be done before I leave my post, I can assure you.

Thirty-six kilometres of paving, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely astounding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Never before have we seen that kind of an investment, Mr. Speaker, in roads. The people have asked for this commitment and we have delivered on this commitment. Certainly there are no limitations on what is going to be done. The successful contractor will move the process along accordingly. We are going to see significant improvements throughout my entire region.

This winter has been a hard one for the Province as a whole. I read on Twitter sometimes about even here in the district of St. John's how many potholes people are encountering on a daily basis, and my district is no different. As a government, we are committed to do what we can in our rural districts, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to see improvements, I can assure you, this summer.

Mr. Speaker, because this roads announcement is so significant – so, so important – the likes of which we have never seen before, I would particularly like to take the time to thank the current minister and previous ministers –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: – who certainly have tolerated a lot from me in terms of my advocating and lobbying on behalf of the districts. In particular, I want to thank those residents at home who have supported me, who understand how challenging it is, and who understand that announcements like this do not happen overnight.

I worked very closely in particular with the Joint Mayors Committee. For a number of years we have identified the section of road that is being done as being a priority. Over the course of this winter, new priorities are being added. Mr. Speaker, I assure my residents that those priorities will be addressed in time as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: I certainly do not intend to give up until we have it all done.

Mr. Speaker, another great announcement I was very fortunate to deliver to my constituents was made on Friday past: \$4 million for broadband.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: This broadband investment, Mr. Speaker, is going to improve our Internet service throughout the entire District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune from Bay d'Espoir to the Connaigre Peninsula to Fortune Bay North Shore. Every part of my district is going to see improved broadband access. We are going to have more customers being able to come online.

Right now, and for the last year or two, actually, Aliant has not been able to take on any new customers; the line was full and massive congestion. We have aquaculture companies whose parents companies are in Nova Scotia. They are doing business in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and the ability to upload and download files in real time was a real challenge for us. Mr. Speaker, as of mid-July this summer, all of those problems will be alleviated for the people in Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Mr. Speaker, we are a government that is indeed listening to the people. It takes time. As all members opposite and anyone who is in a position of responsible governance realizes, you cannot do everything overnight. Rome was not built in a day.

The call for screening for cystic fibrosis is one that has been heard by our government, Mr. Speaker. I am so very pleased this screening will now be taking place and that announcement has been made. We have delivered for the people of the Province as a whole in this regard.

Another very, very important initiative, Mr. Speaker, in terms of health care, one that particularly affects people and rural remote residents like mine is that of the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. I still find there are people who are not really aware of this program. I try to promote it as much as possible. Anyone I know in the region who is

travelling for a medical assistance, we certainly try to get the message out that this program is available. It is a big help.

It is never easy when you are suffering from any kind of illness, Mr. Speaker, be it kidney failure, be it heart failure, be it cancer, or be it an illness with your child. The financial strife, the financial burden that comes with that is something we are trying to ease in terms of rural residents in particular. Unlike people here in town who have their home they can go back to every night, we have to leave home, Mr. Speaker, for specialized services. I am so very pleased we have made significant improvements in that program this year. We introduced the program. We brought the program in, and we are continuing to make it better.

In particular I would like to highlight, the monthly accommodation contribution has increased in Budget 2014 from \$1,500 to \$3,000. We have doubled it, Mr. Speaker. We have also reduced the rate. Prior to 2014, in order to qualify for this program you needed to be driving a total of 2,500 kilometres per year to access specialized services, which in our case, in Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, it is only two and half trips to St. John's. I am very pleased to announce, or to reiterate I guess – it was announced in the Budget Speech – this rate has been reduced from 2,500 kilometres down to 1,500 kilometres.

Now, Mr. Speaker, after just one trip to St. John's and one or two trips to Grand Falls, you will be able to qualify for assistance under the Medical Transportation Assistance Program, in the case of my District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. I am sure on the West Coast that will probably be met within just one trip. It is really going to enhance the ability of rural residents to get to their specialists and receive the services they so desperately need.

In addition to that, with this program, the mileage rate previously at sixteen cents per kilometre has been increased to twenty cents per kilometre in Budget 2014. Once costs for the patient exceeds \$3,000, Mr. Speaker, we are committing to pay 75 per cent of these expenses.

So it is really going to make a difference in the lives of our people who have to travel for specialized services.

Another benefit I see in particular that is going to help people like single parents, young mothers, people who are on Income Support who really want and are able to transition to the workforce – but sometimes there are challenges with that, Mr. Speaker. The cost of transitioning to the workforce, especially if you have a medical ailment, losing that drug card is a big fear.

A few years ago a very good friend of mine had a darling little boy. She was in a position, she was on Income Support and she could not go to work because of medical issues. Financially, she would have been worse off had she gone to work. A program like what we have done this year in Budget 2014 would have enabled her that opportunity, Mr. Speaker. Because now, instead of a six-month period, if there is someone who is on low income wanting to move into the workforce, the benefits of that drug card are going to be extended to one full year, which is really going to enable people to get on their feet.

These are the types of measures that impact in the day to day lives of the average person of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are making a difference, Mr. Speaker, where it counts.

Some of the other things I would like to highlight before I run out of time, is our investments, Mr. Speaker, in water. When I came into office six years ago –

MR. KENT: Here, here!

MS PERRY: Yes, Municipal Affairs has been a wonderful supporter to rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Since my term in office, we have seen significant improvements in water in the Belleoram area. There are portable water dispensing units throughout most of my communities. The Harbour Breton project has been completed. St. Alban's is now working

toward Phase III of its water project. So, we are going to have significantly improved water systems, and the quality of our drinking water has improved significantly over the last five years.

MR. KENT: More to come.

MS PERRY: And more to come, Mr. Speaker.

Before I wrap up today, I want to talk a little bit about the negativity these days. It astounds me that anyone could be at all upset with an announcement like thirty-six kilometres for roads. My goodness, what a fabulous announcement. I am going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, the difference between our side of the House and the other side of the House is optimism and confidence versus negativity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Let's take a look, Mr. Speaker, at what is happening right here in Newfoundland and Labrador today. We are leading the country for the first time in our history. The highest wages in the country, second only to Alberta.

Whoever would have thought Newfoundland and Labrador would have the second-highest average income in Canada? It is unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, and it has happened because of the leadership, the vision, the governance, and the measures and policies put in place by the Progressive Conservative government over the last few years.

Taxes, Mr. Speaker, have never been lower. We are receiving unprecedented benefits from our natural resources. We are leaders in the country in our poverty reduction initiatives. Student grants and tuition; we have frozen tuition for years. In terms of the student loans, in this year's Budget we are converting them back to grants, the provincial portion.

What a difference that is going to make for the children of Newfoundland and Labrador to be able to access post-secondary education. They will not be leaving, Mr. Speaker, university with as high a burden as they otherwise would have.

That happened because of the Progressive Conservative government.

We have high credit ratings, Mr. Speaker, enabling us to pay lower interest on the debt and put more money back into programs and services for the people of this Province. When you talk about wanting change, I scratch my head and I say change to what? We have never been doing better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: I remember the days of the doom and gloom and they were not so very long ago. I remember the mass exodus and the brain drain. I remember the higher taxes. I remember that there were no increases to minimum wage, Mr. Speaker. I remember the low credit ratings, and I remember the have not status that we had as a Province. Those are days I certainly do not want to see again.

The only change I want to see, Mr. Speaker, is continued growth and prosperity. That will be delivered by the Progressive Conservative Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the leadership, the vision, and the policies that we have in place.

I am honoured to have a few moments to stand up here and speak to the amendment on today's Budget. I am even more honoured to be working for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in particular the people of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, as we work together to tackle the challenges ahead of us. I know that with your continued support and our commitment to work together that we will deliver and things will continue to improve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure to rise and address this year's Budget. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: – on the delivery of his maiden speech and truly a representative of the people who he represents.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish the volunteers in our Province all the success as we move into Volunteer Week for the tremendous job they have done in the past, are doing, and certainly will continue to do.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about a couple of issues in this year's Budget. I have skipped through the Budget presentation and there are issues that certainly pertain to my district as well as districts throughout the Province. I noticed early on in the Budget Speech this government talked about search and rescue and putting funding into search and rescue over the next five years.

In the very second paragraph after that, Mr. Speaker, they talk about rural broadband initiatives. It certainly is good to see and it is good to hear we have 95 per cent coverage throughout our Province, but I would like to know what part of the Province falls under the 5 per cent that does not have it, outside of probably the Southern Labrador coast and the Northern Labrador coast for sure.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to tie in the trans-Labrador trails. Over the last ten days, I have driven 1,200 kilometres between Goose Bay, North West River, Postville, Makkovik, and Hopedale by snowmobile. Some of it was on a groomed trail; some of it was not. I think the major reason was there was not enough snow to groom a portion of the trail. I was driving on a trail over sea ice and across portages that were marked by reflectors and trees. I think in the last fifteen years, we have just started to get into marked trails.

Last Sunday night, Mr. Speaker, I drove back from Hopedale to Makkovik and it was in a blizzard. I would like to think I am an experienced snowmobiler, especially up in my area. I have been doing it for almost forty years. Last Sunday when I left Hopedale, I travelled along the trans-Labrador trail and it was at night, it was dark, and it was stormy. Every so often I would see a reflection on a post stuck up in the snow on the bay. I just shut down everything I had and tried to follow that, Mr. Speaker. There were times when I thought: What if I was not experienced? What if I did not know how to get around? So it was always a comfort when I looked at it from the perspective, to see a reflection come out of nowhere 500 yards ahead of you, but there were also times when I drove as much as a mile or a mile-and-a-half before I saw another reflector.

I guess the point I am trying to make is that there has been a lot done over the last fifteen years in terms of trail marking; there is still a lot that could be done. I do not think in any time in the near future will this government even think about building a road up to Northern Labrador. I do not think it is even in the plan or even in their dream.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. EDMUNDS: I think, for that matter, as my colleague just mentioned, nor will there be a power line going up there.

I am going back to my first point, Mr. Speaker, on search and rescue initiatives and broadband initiatives. When you set up a tower for broadband, it has a radius; it can be as high as a forty-mile radius. On the North Coast of Labrador the furthest distance between two communities, I think it is about seventy miles.

Having said that, we are still subject to what Mother Nature can throw at us, more so up there than anywhere else in this Province. When it comes to increasing and applying technology, government sponsored and developed, it seems that the further North you go the less involved this government is; but we are hopeful and we will remain hopeful.

The reason I am tying in search and rescue with broadband is because cellphone service could save lives. I have heard petition after petition after petition in this House of Assembly – and have actually delivered a few myself in the past – on how much of a comfort communication would be and how much more comfortable people would feel if they had that extra piece of communication, Mr. Speaker.

I know it was a little over two years ago, we had a young fellow go missing. It was three days, Mr. Speaker, before we found his body. This incident went national; it went international. We all reference the Burton Winters tragedy. I will point out and I have pointed out many times before, and I will point it out again tonight: I was actually engaged in the search. It is certainly not the best chapter of my life and it is not something that I would wish on anyone to have to go through.

I think the thing that disturbed me the most, Mr. Speaker, out of that whole ordeal is that when we were going through young Burton's clothing and his belongings, I hauled out a BlackBerry that is exactly like this one here – exactly like the one I have in my hand, Mr. Speaker, and I could talk to anybody from here.

Mr. Speaker, young Burton was six miles from Makkovik – six miles – and he could not get out of the jam he was in because it took three strong men to dislodge his snowmobile from where it was jammed. He could not have done it himself; but, Mr. Speaker, I turned on the BlackBerry and it was actually powered up. Young Burton could have made a phone call. He could have made a phone call and within minutes – minutes – we could have been there. We could have been there to the exact spot where his skidoo was found.

We have had incidents since then where people have been broke down and not everyone can afford to buy a satellite telephone. Not everyone can afford to buy a SPOT, Mr. Speaker. That is an opportunity for improvement in search and rescue right there, plus I think with the development and with technology it is a good idea. This government pats itself on the back for

delivering broadband to 95 per cent of the Province, Mr. Speaker. I would love to see the day when they can stand up and say 100 per cent, but I do not think I am going to. Time is going to run out.

We talk about broadband initiatives and what it would take. I actually took it upon myself, Mr. Speaker, to make a call to Bell Aliant and to ask them what initiatives they have had, what partnerships have they discussed with the government of our Province. I was very surprised that there was no dialogue. I stand to be corrected, but this is what I was told by officials at Bell Aliant, that there was no dialogue with this government across the way to even discuss broadband or even Internet on the North Coast. In many areas of our Province, Internet access is maxed out. You cannot do it, you cannot put any more new entries on. I was glad last summer when the government announced \$24 million or \$25 million to bring FibreOP to Muskrat Falls. It was wonderful, Mr. Speaker. I was also glad to hear the businesses in Upper Lake Melville would benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I took it upon myself this past week to write a letter to Bell Aliant, and a copy to ministers. The Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, and to Bell Aliant to try and initiate a dialogue. Something that should have been done. If there is no initial discussion, Mr. Speaker, it is not going to go anywhere.

I am hopeful that there will be a dialogue. I will ensure that there is a dialogue. That the people in Northern Labrador, and Southern Labrador, and other areas in the Province can benefit from what this government is boasting about. So, Mr. Speaker, that is how I would like to tie in broadband and search and rescue.

The other issue I would like to touch on, Mr. Speaker, is one that I have been asking questions about, and that is justice in Labrador. Justice is on the verge of collapse. I think there is no other word to describe it. I printed off the latest court docket, Mr. Speaker. It was twenty-eight pages long. Now, you may ask or question the

fact that there is a lot of crime up there. No, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case.

The reason the court docket is twenty-eight pages long is because of cases that have been postponed, and charges have been put off. It is creating a mess. You wonder why Crown attorneys are leaving, well if you dig not very deeply you will find they are leaving because of lack of resources, they are overworked, and nothing is being done to address the issue.

Now, there was a time when justice was a very serious word in anyone's vocabulary. When you mentioned justice you were serious and you were focused. It is not the case now, Mr. Speaker. Justice is becoming a joke, and that is not something we would like to hear.

There are serious charges that have been put off, Mr. Speaker. I think there were forty-two sexual assault charges or sexual interference – forty-two charges. If you look at the individual cases of serious charges, you will find there are 225 failures to comply or breach of undertaking charges that are attached to those initial charges that are serious.

Mr. Speaker, the thing that bothers me the most is the chronology of how an assault charge is laid and how a breach of undertaking is applied. In individual cases, you have up to fifteen breaches of undertaking. The thing that bothers me the most is in between those breaches of undertaking there is another sexual assault charge laid or another assault charge laid.

Now, I am not a lawyer, but I think a breach of undertaking is considered a serious offence and is punishable by fourteen days in jail. These are being thrown out, Mr. Speaker. I think the correct term that is being used up there now is: in the interest of the court's time. Given the length of the docket and given the number of breaches, the court does not have any time. Why does the court not have time? Because they do not have the resources.

Mr. Speaker, in the Department of Justice Annual Report last year, Goal 1, and I quote, "By March 31, 2014, the Department of Justice

will have implemented initiatives to enhance public trust and confidence.” Now, they have not met that mark. If they did, I would not be bringing up the justice issues back in Labrador.

Goal 2, Mr. Speaker, on the very next page, or a couple of pages, I am sorry. “By March 31, 2014, the Department of Justice will have enhanced its responsiveness to clients’ diverse needs and interests.” Clearly, that did not happen. As a matter of fact, it has only gotten worse.

I have always taken the position of the victims, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to crime. The reason I do that is because I have had e-mails from victims. I have inbox messages from victims. They are living, in some cases, next door to the person who committed the crime against them – next door to where the crime was committed.

When this person is not making an appearance in court or it is being thrown out or postponed, Mr. Speaker, imagine the stress level. Especially in a sexual assault case where the person who committed the offence is awaiting trial for as long as three years in one particular case; three years waiting to go to court on a sexual assault charge. Living in a community that is very, very small, less than 500 people, Mr. Speaker, does nothing to help the victims. How can you talk about justice initiatives a year ago and what you are going to do, and have the situation that we have here today?

Along with sexual assault charges, we have over seventy assault charges or resisting arrest; seventy charges that are waiting for court appearances. I would just like to bring up one example. Last year in the community of Hopedale a house was burnt to the ground. It was through arson, Mr. Speaker. It was an arson that was committed. It has been almost ten months since that incident happened. The person who was accused has been on the docket four times in the last ten months, Mr. Speaker. He is actually not even on the docket this time around.

If you are going to take justice seriously, you need facts and you need examples. I remember the Minister of Justice on previous occasions told me he needed examples, Mr. Speaker. When the court docket is twenty-eight pages long, how many more examples do you need? How many more examples do you need before justice will be taken seriously?

It is good to see some initiatives, Mr. Speaker, crime prevention. I talked to the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services on the situation in Natuashish. I have also talked to members of the Band Council. There is forward movement and that is encouraging because at the end of the day we all want to be on the same page and to reduce Child, Youth and Family Services incidents, hopefully, to zero.

I did notice in the Budget that there was funding for an additional five police officers. Some of the most frustrated people in the justice system, Mr. Speaker, are the police officers. The amount of leg work they do to get a court case on the table, to have it rejected, thrown out, postponed is not a very comforting thought to us, and it certainly makes their workload much more difficult.

I do have some other issues that I do want to address later on as we address the Budget, Mr. Speaker. With that, I will take my place.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to have a few minutes this afternoon to enter in a debate on the Budget debate. It is my pleasure to have this chance to stand up. My focus this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, will be talking about some of the initiatives in my Department of Child, Youth

and Family Services and providing some background.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there is no way I could include all of the work, all of the lines of business that takes place in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services in a twenty-minute period. I will engage in some of those topics this afternoon. I hope and look forward to other opportunities as the Budget goes through its different sessions of the House, its different sittings of the House, and different days of debate and opportunities to rise and discuss other aspects of work that are occurring in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

Mr. Speaker, the department was formed in 2009. It was this government that made that decision after having a very in-depth and comprehensive report carried out in 2008. There was a significant piece of work done and study about the services that were being provided to children, youth, and families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Prior to 2009 – and up to and including 2009, but prior to the decision of government to create its own stand-alone line department, the provision of services, child, youth, and family services, child protection, matters related to child care, matters pertaining to child protection, placements for children as well as –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Prior to 2009 it was delivered through the various regional health authorities throughout the Province. It was done by each individual health authority under their particular program base and how they operated within their own umbrella.

In 2009, this government identified with the absolute need to form a separate line department. We have to make sure that we are providing the best services possible to our most

vulnerable citizens, the children, youth, and families who need the supports of Child, Youth and Family Services, need the supports from government to ensure the best interests of those children.

That was announced and rolled out and began in 2009; it started as a very small department. It was essentially a planning department at that point in time. It was known back then that it was going to take a significant amount of time. We knew, and it was said, that once the department began to evolve and become a department, a functioning, operating department, that it could take likely five years.

I remember the minister of the day at the time talking that this is a big piece of work and it is going to take at least five years to implement. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, through that process, as new policies were developed, there was work done on new legislation. The Children and Youth Care and Protection Act was implemented in 2011. We did a new piece of legislation last fall in the Adoption Act, 2013. We are also working towards a new piece of legislation dealing with child care. We have gone to consultations a number of times, Mr. Speaker, and our work is underway on the child care act and regulations and we continue to do that.

There was the development of a new training unit in 2011, reflective of the need to ensure that our employees, our front-line staff in the department, had the best opportunity to keep current with best practices, best clinical practices, and to ensure that the training continues so that they could be best positioned to do their job well. We also developed in July 2011 a quality unit. A quality unit, mixed with the organizational model that we currently have in the department, worked together to ensure that we continue to make improvements in the quality of work that is done by our front-line employees.

Then there was the transitioning of the delivery of service. So social workers, child protection workers prior to 2009 were actually working in the health authorities, working for the health

authorities under the direction of health authorities. In March 2011, the first region came in, being Western. They left the health authorities and the staff transitioned into the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. This was done in a step-by-step progress. It was later that year, in July 2011, that the Central Region became part of the department. In the fall of that year, Eastern became part of the department. Then later in 2011, metro became part of the department. Then it was not until 2012 that the Labrador services became part of Child, Youth and Family Services.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you it is a significant piece of work. It is a significant department. The work they do is very important. I know members in the House, on both sides of the House, have commented many time on the important work that is done in the provision of services. It was a significant piece of work to transition those employees from one employer, being Eastern Health, Western Health, Labrador-Grenfell Health, and Central Health into one department, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

There has been an ongoing development of policies, procedures, ongoing training – delivered primarily through our training unit – ongoing development of their skills and understanding of the difference in how the departments would operate. Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of things that were done that way.

We have also done other pieces of work as a new department. We have also carried out and implemented new pieces of work. One of the very important ones was the release of Caring for our Future, a ten-year strategy that was released just over a year ago. It focuses on the position of the department relating to child care in 2012 and sets out a ten-year plan. The strategy is based on three pillars, Mr. Speaker. It is based on quality, the quality of delivery of child care services in the Province; it is based on sufficiency, ensuring that there are adequately enough child care spaces in Newfoundland and Labrador; and on affordability. Because as you

build quality and you build sufficiency, we also have to make our efforts to ensure that child care is affordable.

There are a number of things that have done as part of that ten-year strategy. It is available; it is a public document. You can find it on our Web site, and it is a very informative document especially for parents and families who have young children who require child care services. They can see that we are making a very concerted effort and focus over the next ten years to continue to enhance those services.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that since 2003 there has been a significant increase in the number of child care spaces in Newfoundland and Labrador. It has gone from approximately 4,600. As of December 2013, there are approximately 7,800 spaces, which are ahead of our target under the ten-year strategy, but it has been a significant piece of work and significant progress has been made.

The other things that we are doing as part of our child care strategy is we are building wraparound supports to the child care industry and to people who work within the child care industry, and also, to families of children who want to avail of child care, such as the early childhood educators. Early childhood educators are people who work in our child care centres. We encourage them to improve and advance their training. For many years, several years, there was a supplement offered to persons who worked in child care centres. There was a supplement to child care operators who used to receive \$6,660 each year, provided to them on a quarterly basis as a supplement to their income received from their employer. We increased that last year to \$10,000, and for Level I early childhood educators working in a homeroom we have increased that from \$3,300 to \$6,600 a year. Again, that paid out quarterly. That helps to encourage people to consider a career in child care in Newfoundland and Labrador and also to obtain their necessary qualifications and education. I am going to talk later about that. I know in later debates I will be talking about that as well.

Also, Mr. Speaker, at the end of December and the end of 2013 there were more than 2,300 children in Newfoundland and Labrador whose families took advantage of the child care subsidy. We subsidized the cost of child care to those families who are eligible to receive it. Over \$15 million this year will assist and support families in Newfoundland and Labrador in being able to avail of child care.

As well, there is a child care operating grant program, Mr. Speaker, and this is a new one announced in this year's Budget; \$9.7 million for a child care operating grant program. That will be implemented this year. The focus of this particular grant, this new voluntary operating grant program, is to provide funding to eligible child care centres that set their rates at the provincial subsidy rate and also meet our criteria. If they do that, if they provide regulated child care opportunities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and they charge the provincial subsidized rates, then this year we are going to implement an operating grant program to assist those operators to ensure they can continue to provide services that include the three pillars of our focus of our strategy and include quality, sufficiency, and affordability.

Mr. Speaker, there are big pieces of work going on in child care. We are continuing to make advancements. We recognized very early through preparation of the ten-year strategy that you could not do this overnight. It was impossible to do this overnight. We have to continue to do it piece by piece by piece. We work towards enhancing child care opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador and we do it through a well-planned, well-strategized means so we can continue to grow, and we are on track.

Mr. Speaker, not to get off into the topic of full-day kindergarten because it is not my intention to go down the road and have a discussion about that today, but we also know, through implementation of full-day kindergarten, those children who now require half-day spaces and actually in most places occupy a space for a full day because they go mornings, afternoons, and a combination of – as those children move into full-day kindergarten in 2016, we know that will

open up spaces for younger children throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know in speaking to many parents who were very excited about the announcement in the Budget of full-day kindergarten in 2016, our understanding, especially those who have younger children, is they will be able to avail of and attend full-day kindergarten. It is also a full year then, Mr. Speaker, that parents do not have to pay for child care. It is a full year earlier that they do not have to pay for full-time child care for their children.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on to our Continuum of Care. There has been some discussion about this publicly recently. We announced in May that we were entering into new contracts for Level 4 services. I just want to, in the time I have remaining, talk about that a little bit. As I talked about earlier, I explained how, before the department was developed, the provision of services was being administered through individual health authorities throughout the Province. That includes our Continuum of Care or foster care throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

As a new department, we have developed what we refer to as the level system, a four-level system. Level 1 is referred to as kinship homes, which is the home of a person who is a near relative or a person who is a significant other or significantly known to a child. This is for those circumstances, these very difficult circumstances and very necessary circumstances, where a child can no longer stay in their home and we are required to find an out-of-home placement. It is how we refer to it quite normally as an out-of-home placement, but it is those circumstances where for one of any number of reasons – and, Mr. Speaker, there could be hundreds of thousands of reasons why a child or children can no longer stay in their home, sometimes for a short period of time, it could be for a longer period of time, and it could become a permanent requirement that those children cannot stay in their homes.

Level 1 would be the kinship option, and that would be the first sought-after option, that a

child be placed in a home where they are familiar with the family they are going to live with, if it is a relative, a near relative, or someone who is a significant other or well known to the family.

Level 2 is what we would call a regular foster home. They are people from throughout the Province, throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, who agree to take children and youth into their homes who require an out-of-home placement. They are all over Newfoundland and Labrador. I have had the privilege since I have been in this department, Mr. Speaker, to meet many of them. I could spend a full afternoon talking about programs and assistance supports for all the levels of foster care. It is not my intention to do that today, only to make an overview and talk about Level 4. They are the foster people in the Province who care for children when we need a home for those children to go to.

Then Level 3 is specialized foster care and specialized foster homes. Level 3 is a work in progress. We, in coming weeks, will begin training Level 3 foster parents, specialized parents. Those are circumstances where the needs of a child or needs of a youth require that the foster parents have a higher level of understanding and training education. We provide that for them as a specialized foster home. We are looking forward to begin rolling out the training for specialized foster homes in the coming weeks.

That brings us to Level 4. Level 4 is staffed residential settings. Level 4, Mr. Speaker, is for circumstances where children have the most complex personal needs, they have complex social needs, they have complex emotional needs, they have developmental complexities and needs, and also complex developmental needs, or a combination of. These are where the Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 are not a fit or an option for those children.

Level 4 is broken out into different categories. We have group homes. Group homes are a group home setting where staff works in a home. The children and youth live in the home, and

staff works in the home. Again, they are for the most complex needs, social needs, emotional behaviour, and developmental needs.

We also have individual living arrangements. Mr. Speaker, this is where a child or youth's needs are extraordinary. There is no other way to describe it only extraordinary. They have extraordinary medical needs, extraordinary emotional needs, and extraordinary behavioural needs, and other options of foster care are not an option in those particular cases.

Then we also have EPH or emergency placement homes. Those are twenty-four-hour emergency placements where we can house children. There are staff placements for a short period of time or a short to medium period of time either for an emergency placement, or to enable us to conduct an assessment of their needs, and sometimes in transitions.

Mr. Speaker, what happened recently and what happened prior was the health authorities had outside services providing the services of staffed residential homes. There were profit and not-for-profit organizations. Most of them were unionized. Their employees in the cases where they are unionized are covered under NAPE contracts, contracts of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees. They have contracts through them. Some were for profit and some were not for profit.

In 2010, before all the health authorities came in, the Auditor General reported that Eastern Health needs to go through a competitive process. The Auditor General recommended that Eastern Health should go through a competitive process. We know why the Auditor General makes those recommendations. We know it is because it is a service being provided by government. It is being provided through taxpayers' dollars, and the service needs to be the best quality available. The provision of services needs to be the best quality available and we should do that through a competitive process.

A year ago, early 2013, the department was in consultation with all the service providers and invited proposals from them. NAPE was notified and aware of the process we were going through. Since that time there has been a competitive process underway, and in March we reached the conclusion and awarded contracts on this competitive process. The contracts have been awarded, I say, Mr. Speaker. The service providers who now have contracts with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services are the same service providers who were providing before, but there are service providers who will no longer be providing services to the department.

I also would like to point out that these for-profit and not-for-profit agencies are stand-alone groups. Some are voluntary boards that were formed years ago for a different purpose, and then evolution began to take what is now our staffed residential placements or Level 4 care. There are for-profit businesses as well that were developed to provide staffed residential placements.

Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough, in some of the rural homes that were board operated, where employees were covered under a NAPE agreement, the new provider, which happens to be a for-profit provider, their employees are also covered under an agreement by NAPE, separate from the other ones as well. They are still stand-alone outside of government. We went through the competitive process, we sought out the opportunities to provide the best services we could to children and youth, and that resulted in the awarding of the contracts that we awarded in March and are working towards transitioning.

I would also like to very quickly point out in the few seconds I have left that I know the member opposite has talked about not having a transition plan. I would just like to point out to the House, Mr. Speaker, to clarify that each individual child's needs are individual needs. They are unique to themselves. I can tell you there has been an individual placement plan for each individual child. So this is not where we go out and say we are going to do all this for all these children and all-encompassing; every child is

going to be dealt with in the same manner. Each individual child is being dealt with individually, and that is in their best interests.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity and I look forward to the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am happy to rise in this House and to speak for the first time on *Budget 2014: Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook*.

I would also like to commend the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace for his initial speech here today. It is good to have him in the House with all of us here.

Mr. Speaker, our work here in the House is to manage the resources and to make legislation that enables all of our citizens to thrive, to thrive in this prosperity that government so often talks about. At one point the Premier said we were in a golden age. I think that is pretty hopeful. Those are pretty positive and optimistic words.

I would like to talk a little bit about what that means. What does it mean for a society, a community, and a people to thrive, to live in a golden age, and to live in a time of prosperity? What does that mean? What do we need as a healthy, functioning society so that everybody can thrive, so that everybody can do their best, so that everybody can fully participate in the prosperity, so that everybody can be a fully participating member of our society, so that they can continue to help build that prosperity, and so that they can continue to care well for their families, their neighbours, and the people who are in their community?

I would also think that a measure of a thriving, prosperous society is one where people do not have to scramble, where they do not have to try and figure out how to cope and how to make it.

I would think in some ways it would be a society where we know there is a security, that there is food security, that there is income security –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: – that there is shelter security, that people are healthy, and when they are not healthy that they have access to full medical treatment that is top of the line. Those are the kinds of images that conjure up in my mind, Mr. Speaker, when we know we are in a thriving, prosperous society where not only is no one left behind but everybody gets to participate; that a society runs smoothly, that we know how to take care of our challenges, we know how to take care of people who are somehow vulnerable, and we know how to take care of people who are not participating as fully as they would like to.

Our job, I know it is not really easy, but if we were to boil it down to what people really need, we all need a job. We all need some meaningful work to do. Sometimes that is paid work; sometimes it is not paid work. We all need a place to live, we all need a home, and we all need somebody to love or who will love us, whether that is family, a partner, or a community. Those are basically the three things that we need: we need community, we need work, and we need a safe and secure place to live.

Then our role as legislators is to ensure we manage the resources that belong to the people. I know that is not simple. It is easy to talk about it in simplistic manners, but in fact I know how complex that is. I know how complex it is for the Minister of Natural Resources to ensure we get the best possible deal we possibly can for our natural resources, particularly for those that are non-renewable because of the very fact they are not renewable. I know what a great responsibility that is.

What a great responsibility it is for ministers who have portfolios taking care of some of the big-ticket items that affect the future of our Province and that affect the economic viability

of our Province. Always in their work there must be the guiding principle of the future for our citizens, the present time for our citizens, and what each citizen needs in order to be able to thrive. Also, what are our measures to ensure we have a prosperous society and we have a prosperous community where everybody does thrive, where everyone is functioning, and where everyone can participate to the best of their ability?

I would like to look at the whole issue, then, where everybody needs a job. A job means that you feel you are fully participating in society. Again, Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is not a paid-work job but it is work you might do as a volunteer or somehow that you have the right, the ability, and the opportunity to participate in society.

We have some problems in the area of jobs in our Province. We know that maybe there are more jobs and, yes, there are more high-paying jobs than there used to be, but there are also way more low-paying jobs than there used to be. We have more and more people working in lower-paying jobs in the service sector and in the retail sector, and a lot of those are minimum-wage jobs without any security and without any benefits. So, in fact, just throwing around numbers saying there are more jobs and there are more high-paying jobs, does not give us the real picture of really the division, that division of labour and that division of income. Because the last Budget was a brutal budget for many people, a Budget that really impacted the lives of many people; people who are still trying to recover from it.

For instance, we know we lost upwards of 2,000 public sector jobs, not absolute 2,000 layoffs. We had about 1,500 layoffs, but we also lost jobs through attrition, through retirement. Those were 2,000 jobs that were spread out over the Province. They were jobs that were well paying, that we had assumed were secure, that had good pension benefits, and good health and medical benefits.

Those were jobs that therefore had an impact, not only on the immediate individual who had

those jobs, but the communities in which they lived and their families. We are still seeing the ripple effect of that. We are still seeing how those ripples are spreading out in their communities, whether it is in disposable income, whether it is in whether or not children are able to avail of dance lessons or whether people are able to take holidays. We still see the ripple effects of that, and this Budget has done nothing to affect that.

This Budget has done nothing to address the large hole in our economy because of the loss of 2,000 public sector jobs. The result of that, also, is in the services that are delivered to the people of the Province. We have seen where there have been cutbacks in services.

We have seen, for instance, in the Department of AES where we see people have to wait six to eight weeks. For people who are newly applying for income support, they may have to wait up to six to eight weeks for an initial cheque. For many of us in the House, if we did not have our income for six to eight weeks some of us would really feel it, but we are not in that really, really bottom of the income level that a lot of these people are.

Many of these people are living from, not only from cheque to cheque, but their cheques do not stretch out. They do not make it to the next run. They have to use food banks or somehow be creative enough to find a way to make it from that cheque to the next cheque. These are real hardships. Mr. Speaker, that again is not a picture that I conjure up when I think of a prosperous society.

I would also like to say in this Budget there were public sector jobs lost. We know there were at least forty-four public sector jobs that were involved in group homes in Burin, Stephenville, and Grand Falls-Windsor. These were jobs that their contract was negotiated for them on behalf of Treasury Board. They belonged to the public sector pension plan. They belonged to the public sector health plan. They had rights to succession. They are much different than the unionized workers, for instance, who work on behalf of Blue *sky*. These are a different

category of worker. They are true, public sector jobs.

Mr. Speaker, those are gone. Those are forty-four jobs that are gone as a result of this Budget. They, again, were well-paying jobs with benefits. It affects not only the people who have lost those jobs; it affects their families and it affects their communities. Those jobs are being replaced. Right now, the company who is filling those jobs, who have a contract to care for our very vulnerable people, are offering jobs at about \$13 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about are amongst the most vulnerable children and youth in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, ones with very, very complex needs. One of the things that are so important to these youth is to have stability. What is happening is that some of these kids have been living in these group homes for years, with the same staff for years. They were told two weeks ago today that their home was being dismantled and they are moving, but nobody could tell them exactly where they are going to go, exactly when they were going to go, and exactly who was going to be taking care of them.

Imagine any of us here in this House if we were told that within ninety days, out of the blue – this was not gradual – sixty days, pardon me, because the staff were told ninety days. Within sixty days you are going to be moving and you are going to be living somewhere else. We cannot tell you where you are going to be living. We cannot tell who you are going to be living with. We cannot tell you who is going to be taking care of you. That kind of instability is so damaging and particularly damaging to these particular vulnerable youth.

For some people maybe it is not a big deal, but this is a real serious issue where there is no comprehensive rollout plan. These children have not been told in two weeks where they are going. It would be great to hear what the plan is, if the houses are bought and set up, and if the kids know where they are moving to.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS ROGERS: The Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services is standing up and saying: Yes, they have been told. I am being told otherwise. Maybe the information I have is wrong. If the minister can tell us exactly where these children are going to be living in forty-five days from now, because they are not going to be living where they are living now. Maybe the minister can tell us exactly where they are going to live. I do not think he knows exactly where they are going to live. I do not think he has that information.

There has not been a comprehensive plan, an actual protocol for the rollout of this new initiative. Mr. Speaker, when I asked the minister in Estimates what the protocol and the rollout plan was, he did not have one. Do you know what? They do not have one.

In fact, what they have done is they are releasing these children into the hands of a for-profit, private organization that presently is trying to hire staff. They have forty-five days, Mr. Speaker, before these kids have to be moved. They are going to hire staff at \$13 an hour. They want staff who are experienced, and staff who have training. They are going to hire them, they are going to train them, they are going to set-up a House, and they are going to move these kids within forty-five days. They knew for years that they were going to do this.

What is the plan? This is not the way to take care of our most vulnerable youth in the Province. That I know – that for sure I know.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit more about jobs. After jobs I would like to talk a little bit about the whole issue of it is important for everybody to be able to have access to a job of some sort, but it is also important for everybody to have a safe, secure place to live. We do know that housing is one of the key determinants of poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador, but I will get to that.

There have been some really good items in this new Budget. I was really happy to see some of the new items in this Budget that were rolled out. There are things we have been pushing for years, and I am really happy to see them. The fact that there is a continued freeze on tuition is really important. We know what a burden a student loan can be. The fact that loans will eventually be moved to grants is a great initiative. I am so proud that is one of the initiatives of this Budget.

Let's take a look at young teachers in our Province. Many young teachers are still substitute teachers. Unfortunately, they did not have the access to grants in the same way. Many of them are carrying large student loans, but what they are doing is substitute hours.

There has been a change now. They have to have so many hours of substitute hours before they are even eligible to apply for a permanent job. I do not know if most people know that. The number of hours has been changed, so it could take up to fifteen years before a young person who is carrying also a student loan for their education so that they could educate our children – let's not forget what this is all about. These are people who have gone to school, taken on student debt so that they, in turn, could educate our youth; it is a noble, noble, noble profession. It can take up to fifteen years now to get the hours in order to be eligible to apply for a permanent job. That means we have these young working families who have no stability. They do not have a stable job. They do not have a job with all the benefits that teachers should be able to have access to, because the job that they are doing is so incredibly important.

What does that mean for those families? They cannot buy a house, so they are not building up family equity. Maybe they are drowning in debt. Many of them have said I cannot afford to have a child because I cannot afford the child care. I do not have a permanent job; I do not know where it is going.

I spoke to a young couple yesterday, Mr. Speaker. The woman in the couple is a permanent teacher. Her partner, her husband, it

is going to take him up to fifteen years before he can even apply for a permanent job. So he has said after all these years of learning to be a teacher so he can educate our children and amassing student debt, he has to give up. He cannot pursue this any longer. There is no security of job for him whatsoever, so he is going to have to try to do something else. This is someone who has been educated, a young man who had such a passion who was willing to educate our children; he has had to give up. He said I cannot do it.

He is not the first one I have heard that story from. We have all heard that story. We have all heard the story of our young people who are so passionate about educating our children who have to give up on education because they cannot get access to any kind of job security.

Then I would like to look at the whole issue of child care. I think it is a very important issue. It is also one of the determinants of whether or not families can fully participate in the workforce. I think that some of the initiatives that have been announced in this Budget are very good, but it is not enough. How many people, when I hear their stories, say: Look at Quebec; why can't we do what Quebec has?

Quebec has a fully integrated, comprehensive, publicly funded child care program that is integrated into their Early Childhood Education Program. It makes sense. People say: Why can't we have that? I say why can't we have that? It is a great investment; it is not a waste of money. It is a sign, again, of a fully prosperous, thriving society when we can educate our youth, educate our children, and take good care of our children so their parents can participate fully in the workforce. I think that would be the sign of a thriving – an absolute thriving – province, a province that is in its golden age. That would be a sign.

I do not know why we cannot. Does it come down simply to political will? We know it is a great investment. All the research has shown that is a great investment. As it stands now, the eligibility ceilings for assistance for child care are so high and they have not kept up to the

modern family's cost of living. I will get to housing when I stand up next, but the fact that we see the cost of living and the cost of food – who can go to a grocery store week to week and not see the cost of food going up?

The child care initiatives we see now are not really responding to the reality of young working families' lives. Also, when we look at single moms who are trying to enter the workforce, many people say either they cannot afford to work because child care is so expensive or, even more desperate than that, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that people are saying they cannot afford to have children. That is not the picture of a thriving, prosperous society – that is in no way the picture of a thriving, prosperous society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to standing again and talking about housing.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honour to be able to stand up today and talk to Budget 2014. What I am going to try to focus on is the fair society part of the Budget. In my department, with Transportation and Works, and certainly as the Minister Responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, I guess my department touches every district within the Province. You will soon find out during Budget process who your real friends are and who your enemies may be.

It was an education within itself, going through Budget as the Minister of Transportation and Works, because there is so much to go around. As you hear quite often from all sides of the House, there is so much work to be done. As a government, we try to prioritize. With the

allocated Budget you have, you try to make sure that you spread that funding around to best suit the residents of the Province throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what we as a government have done.

I certainly appreciate how important it is to have a well-developed infrastructure in Transportation and Works, and how important it is to have good roads to travel on, good highways to travel on. I understand how important it is – the ferry system within our Province. A large portion of our Province is an island within itself, and then off that island we also have smaller islands that have populations on them. Then you get into what we know as the Big Land, Labrador, and of course the southern section of Labrador is very dependent upon a ferry system also.

So I understand all of that and I understand how important it is and how critical it is to all of these communities to have a good infrastructure in place so that the Province as a whole within itself can be a viable Province.

When you think about it, Mr. Speaker, we are a Province of just over half a million people, and we are quite large, geographically; the Province is quite large. You look at the tax base that would come in from our population – and I hear some of the members opposite that would compare us to provinces such as Quebec, when it comes to our education system. It is very difficult to compare our Province with a small population and the geographic size we have to a province like Quebec, which is still fairly large, of course, when it comes to their population base and the tax base they have coming in. It is much larger than that of Newfoundland and Labrador. So, I do not think that is comparing apples with apples.

One of the things that I heard as I was travelling throughout the Province and in many of the municipalities and communities that I went into, as well as from a lot of the MHAs over the past couple of months, especially during the Budget process, was the needs of their municipalities. I am just going to focus on this particular winter.

This winter has been a very different winter. It is not the first time that I have said that in the House of Assembly. I have found that this winter reminded me as what I refer to and as what I have heard a lot of constituents throughout the Province refer to this winter as an old-fashioned winter. Certainly, when I saw pictures down in Burgeo – La Poile last week when you had twenty-foot embankments on the highways – and I have to compliment the media when they did clipping of my department, the Department of Transportation and Works, and what a fantastic job they were doing, not just in clearing the roads but in the safety aspect of it.

You could see two pieces of equipment that were coming together in that area where you had twenty foot embankments of snow on each side of you in heavy drifting. Those workers were out there making sure at all times that any emergency vehicle that needed to get through – if there was an emergency, the Department of Transportation and Works at that time led them through with a convoy to make sure they did get to where they needed to go. I have to compliment my staff within the department for doing that.

In the time that I have, I want to focus on transportation. I want to focus on the road structure we have. We have about 10,000 kilometres of highways, roads, side roads, and trunk roads that we are responsible for in the Province. You heard me talk about the harsh winter we had, you could be driving up a street anywhere in the Province – we have the complaints coming in from everywhere. At one point you could drive down the street in the morning and there was not a pothole there, and because of the inclement weather we have had this season, when you went home that evening there was a pothole developing.

I spent quite a bit of time with my senior officials. We take a pothole for granted and we take the repair of a pothole for granted. I asked my senior officials to sit down with me and explain to me how a pothole develops so quickly. Like I said, there were days when you drive – I know one day I was driving down

Higgins Line here in the metro and there was not a pothole there.

I know last night when I went home that pothole has now gone from a small little pothole in the road on Higgins Line to about three feet wide now and maybe four feet long. I asked my senior staff to explain to me how that happens. It is amazing how it can happen and how quickly it can happen. It is all throughout the Province.

Just recently, this past weekend in Labrador, I had a gentleman from the South Coast of Labrador who sent me pictures through Facebook. He was commenting on some of the potholes and the ruts in the road this spring. He even went so far as to name two of the potholes. He named one of them McGrath's lake and he named the other PC pond. They are substantial dips in the road.

Again, I went to my senior officials – and the first thing I have to do is get a sign made with McGrath's lake on it and get that done of course. It is not every day you get a lake named after you, supposing it is in the middle of the Trans-Labrador Highway. I have to get some signage put on that on the South Coast of Labrador.

Then I asked my senior official: Is there anything we can do about this immediately to get this fixed? I was on the phone this morning with some of the operators who are responsible for grading it. They said you are in the middle of a spring thaw. You are actually at the beginning of a spring thaw. Believe me, it has been a long awaited spring thaw we have waited on this year.

They said you are still dealing with a frozen gravel road. This road is still under construction, this section of the Trans-Labrador Highway. Like any gravel road when it freezes, during the spring thaw you get – very quickly on the top it becomes thawed out, and you are going to get ruts and it is going to become slippery. This operator explained to me that if we go in now and we grade that off until we get back down to the frozen ground, all you are doing is making more mud. You are making a small problem bigger.

I empathize with the constituents in the Province who have to deal with situations like that. I understand where they are coming from but I ask them to be patient. If I get time I am going to talk about some of the investments this government has made in the Trans-Labrador Highway. I will say that it is over half a billion dollars already spent on the Trans-Labrador Highway. That is a significant piece of infrastructure. One of the largest projects ever taken on by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think it is important we realize that it is not built overnight. It has been a long time coming but you see progress now all the time.

I ask the people on the South Coast to bear with us while we are constructing, still building, that new highway there. During the thaw season it is going to be difficult. It is going to be hard to get through that, but this government is working on that.

I think some of the other things I would like to touch on before I get into where we are spending some of the money, some of the infrastructure that we have been building. I will start in the furthest district west in the Province, my own District of Labrador West. Hopefully, this year – as a matter of fact, I know this year, hopefully, within the next month or two months –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. MCGRATH: The furthest district west, Sir. I am not quite sure on that one, it is probably yours.

Anyway, we have a new hospital opening up in my district. This is a piece of infrastructure in a very busy industrial area, district in the Province, and we have a \$100 million state-of-the-art medical facility that will be opening this year. I have had the pleasure of touring the industry two or three times now during the progress of it being constructed. I am really excited, as are the people in my district, to have this open.

Just a couple of years ago we had a brand new College of the North Atlantic that opened right

next door to that hospital in my district. With the idling of Wabush mines, our present Premier, Premier Marshall, was very quick; within twenty-four hours Premier Marshall was on the ground in my district with me and the Minister of Natural Resources. We spoke to the people and we asked the people, what is it we can do now to alleviate some of these problems?

Premier Marshall very quickly realized he had to put a minister in charge of that bridging process, in charge of overseeing the transition period while the mine was going into the idle position, and getting the next steps in place. I am very pleased to say the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, with myself and several other ministers, within six days was back on the ground in Labrador West and we have been very active ever since building relationships with the leaders in the community to make sure that those bridges are being built and the structure in place.

For example, the minister was in my district just this past Thursday and announced more programs going into the College of the North Atlantic. These programs that are being announced now are programs that are needed by the residents in Labrador West for what the industry is supplying. The industry has needs. We are supplying a particular type of industry, and you have needs and programs within that college system. That is what the Advanced Education and Skills Department is now focusing on, making sure that rather than my constituents having to leave the area to do the blocks – as was said before.

I was at a resident's home on Friday evening, and there were ten or twelve constituents around. One of the young gentlemen who were there in that particular home that evening thanked me. He said: You know, minister, I am about to go now and do my final block, my fourth block as an electrician. He has a young three-year-old son, newly married in the last three years. He said it is a pleasure and a relief to be able to stay home for those six weeks and do his final block in his own home. He does not have to pay for his mortgage in Labrador West and then accommodations outside in St. John's in order to do that last block. He does not have

to have two vehicles on the go. He does not have to buy two lots of groceries.

All of this adds up, not to mention the emotional strain that has when you are away from your family, especially a young family, because not always can your spouse or your children travel with you when you have to move for those six weeks. Although it may seem like a small thing to some people, to young families who are trying to increase their education and better their education through skilled trades, that is a big benefit right now to be able to get that benefit right at home in Labrador West. In listening to the general public, these are the types of things this government, right now, is advancing forward to make sure the residents throughout the Province are better taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, I am running low on time and I just want to touch base on some of the things throughout my department, throughout Transportation and Works. As I said, this Budget process is a difficult process to go through. At the end of the day, when the Budget was delivered, I was very pleased with some of the things that happened within my department that I was able to advocate for on behalf of all the residents, all the constituents, of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, this year our government is putting \$81 million into upgrades and enhancements to the provincial road-funding structure. That is the largest amount of money that has been invested in the roads program since Igor. That is a significant amount of money. We would like to be able to put in more. I would love to be able to say to every MHA: You give me a list of what you want done, and I am going to guarantee you I will get it done. Unfortunately, it does not work that way.

Although \$81 million sounds like a lot of money, you take that \$81 million and that covers, believe it or not, about one-tenth of the requests I have had from MHAs this year to get the work done in the Province. I have requests of a little over \$800 million and I have \$81 million to work with. Although \$81 million sounds like a lot of money, when you start

spreading it out over the needs of the Province – and people say, well, my needs are my priority. Everyone has their own priorities, so it is very difficult to be able to decide where that is going.

Another thing we are doing on top of that \$81 million, Mr. Speaker, is we are taking another \$76.3 million this year to continue work on the widening and upgrading of the Trans-Labrador Highway. The Trans-Labrador Highway for me is an important piece of work because I remember back in the early 1980s when I was advocating as a young man in Labrador West to have that highway developed and to consider developing that highway. I remember back in the early 1980s when you could only drive nineteen kilometres.

When this highway is finished, you are going to be able to drive close to 1,200 kilometres on a paved, upgraded, state-of-the-art highway. So that is another \$76.3 million that will be spent this year on upgrading and widening of Phases II and III of the Trans-Labrador Highway.

Also on top of that, Mr. Speaker, we are going to take another \$7.3 million to complete Phase I of the Trans-Labrador Highway between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Labrador West. So, at the end of this summer, you will actually be able to leave Labrador City-Wabush and drive to Happy Valley-Goose Bay; and for a lot of people out there who are listening – and maybe some people in this House – who do not understand how large an area that is, you are actually driving 700 kilometres to drive from Labrador City to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. That will be completely upgraded and paved at the end of this summer. I think that shows exactly what this government is doing.

As many of you who are listening today have heard me announce, we are putting another \$71 million into ferry vessel replacements and ongoing maintenance. We have tenders out there right now. We have two ferries that are being constructed. One is for the Fogo Island run; the other is for Bell Island. They will be sister ships – state-of-the-art ferries, long waited for.

The other thing, we are taking \$10 million and we have realized if you are going to bring in new ferries, sometimes you have to improve your dock structure. We are going to be spending another \$10 million on the dock infrastructure in Portugal Cove and Bell Island to match these ferries. So these are huge, huge investments that this government has already announced.

I am also very proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that earlier, or very late in 2013, because I did promise the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains that I would have it announced before the end of December, and I think I delivered on that promise. I think it was December 13 or 14 that I announced the tender for a fifteen-year project for two new ferries: one for the Strait of Belle Isle, going from St. Barbe or Corner Brook to Blanc Sablon, and the other one for the North Coast of Labrador.

Certainly both of those ferries need to be replaced. Not only are we putting in two new ferries up there, we also have, during part of that RFP, that RFP is going to provide new passenger service, new freight service, and new vehicle service to both the Straits and the North Coast of Labrador. I think I can speak for all members of Labrador, that when those ships are in place, we will all feel a lot better. So, I am really pleased with that.

Mr. Speaker, I am running out of time. Another couple of big projects that we have made huge investments in: \$28.5 million into the new lift bridge in Placentia and the Sir Robert Bond Bridge, which in the next very short order I will be going out to Central Newfoundland again to make an announcement as to when that tender will be released on the Sir Robert Bond Bridge.

Also, Mr. Speaker, \$27.7 million to manage 620 pieces – I think it is a very good way to end off – of heavy equipment for maintaining our roads, whether it be in the summer or in the winter. All of that equipment is maintained, kept in very good shape by the employees in my department. I commend them for that.

Mr. Speaker, I am running out of time. I look forward to being able to stand again and speak on this Budget. I think it is a great Budget and I think everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador will prosper.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and I am going to be speaking for a few minutes in support of the non-confidence motion. As a member representing rural, all of the communities in my district are rural, I cannot speak with any confidence to the Budget that was brought down, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for Baie Verte – Springdale talked about the Budget with a big heart. He referenced many times last week when he was up: the Budget with the big heart. I could not help but think it is a heart that is ready for surgery, Mr. Speaker. It seems like it has a lot of blockages in my mind, especially when it comes to resources, money flowing into the needs in Labrador. If it is a Budget with a big heart I think it is a heart that needs a surgery, I might say to the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

Mr. Speaker, I was looking up some things before I came down today and from first oil to, I think it was last year, \$17 billion in revenue from oil alone – \$17 billion, Mr. Speaker, from first oil to last year in revenue and we are just talking oil. Yet, I just listened to my colleague across the way talk about the roadwork. He is talking about the roadwork, but we had to wait a decade before the pavement was announced for my area.

I drove home again on the weekend, Mr. Speaker, and I did not know what my husband meant when he said try to keep her on the high points when you are driving, because he did not want me to tear the bottom out of our machine.

I soon found out it was absolutely atrocious; the trenches were this deep. When people stand up and talk about bad roads, I think it is all relevant. I have to smile because I would encourage anybody to come into my area and look at what we are driving on and compare it to any other part of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot stand today without mentioning Muskrat Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: I was not going to mention Muskrat today because it is a sore spot. Members across the way asked me many times: Where do you stand on it? I think the project has gone too far now that you are not going to cancel it anyway. I am still fighting for people in my district to get some benefits from this mega industrial project that is going ahead, \$8 billion, \$9 billion, Mr. Speaker.

As I was about to stand just another example of a typical day for me, an e-mail comes in from an apprentice ironworker, with a lot of hours. I was co-ordinating some things with the union; we got him into Bull Arm. He was there six hours and was laid off. Now he is trying to get into Muskrat Falls. These are some of the issues, Mr. Speaker, that we are dealing with in Labrador.

I remember the Member for Terra Nova last fall was saying every time I rise I am talking doom and gloom. The road was bad at that time, too. My response to him then: It is hard to see the sunshine when you have about three inches of mud on your windshield. A lot of times we do talk doom and gloom because the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, a beautiful part of the Province, elect you to be a voice. You have

a job to stand in your place and to raise the issues.

There was a gentleman in L'Anse-au-Loup who said to me the last time I was home – he patted me on the back and he said: You keep standing up, my dear, and raising the issues and eventually you might shame them into giving you something better, when you talk about all the resources that are coming out of Labrador through Voisey's Bay, through IOC, through Muskrat Falls, and through the oil basins that are off the shores of Labrador. I will continue to do that. I will continue to educate the people in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, on the issues and the quality of life that we have right now and how much things could be improved upon.

Mr. Speaker, the member across the way was just talking about roads. While I was home on Saturday I had a chance to go out to watch a number of dog teams, the big regional dog team race. After the races I had a little ride on the komatik myself. When I came back I joked with someone and said that is the smoothest ride I have had in a long time on a komatik. Hundreds of years what we have been using and it is smoother than what we are driving on the road. I say it is shameful; it is pathetic. You cannot help but smile.

I stood today and I presented a petition, Mr. Speaker, looking for calcium for our roads. I do not hear the other members in this House looking for calcium, looking for a form of dust control. Can you imagine? It is just unheard of –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS DEMPSTER: Well, I do not hear you speaking out for your members, but I am.

There was not very much in Budget 2014 that I could find for Labrador, but one of the things I did see is that they are going to be doing some renovations at Point Amour. I am pleased to see that. They are going to put some money into renovating the tallest lighthouse in Atlantic Canada that happens to be in my district, yet the tourist is going to drive through – we all know

what the wind blows like in the Labrador Straits. They are going to drive through a sandstorm to get out there.

I think the total budget in the Province on calcium was \$700,000. I said to a member across the way last week: It is a nominal amount of money. His response to me was: It is all nominal. No, it is not all nominal. When you look at the 90-10s, Mr. Speaker, in my district alone the needs for basic, basic infrastructure, it is \$5 million or \$6 million. We are still trying to catch up with the rest of the Province with water and sewer and things like that. In each of the communities it is about a million dollars, or some might be looking for \$1.5 million.

When I say nominal if you can, for \$700,000, put the calcium on the roads or something – we do not care what it is – to keep the dust down around the Province then it was money well spent, Mr. Speaker. We are trying to entice people into the region; we are trying to invite tourists in, in the summertime, to generate some revenue into the economy.

Mr. Speaker, \$2 million in this year's Budget for brush cutting. I believe it was back in 2006 or 2007 that my district received the last of the brush cutting money, and that was on the St. Lewis Access. When you are driving, Mr. Speaker, it is a very serious hazard. Last summer, a number of times I contacted the minister into the fall with the growth right out on the road and now we certainly have an increase in moose. Almost every time I am driving on my road, I am seeing at least a couple of moose. Years ago, that was unheard of. Yet, we see that we have not been getting any of the brush cutting money. Of the \$2 million, I will certainly be after the minister looking for some of that brush cutting money to come back.

I know the pavement is announced and members across the way love to say she is getting pavement; they are getting pavement. Mr. Speaker, I have to say again we are not getting anything that the rest of the Province does not have. I was out in Burin last fall, beautiful little communities, I was in Parkers Cove and Rushoon, and you go up the back alleys and if it

is wide enough for a footpath, it is paved. I could not believe it. That is good for them, but what we are looking for is just to catch up, Mr. Speaker.

The thirty-five year old pavement in the Labrador Straits, Route 510, seventy-six kilometres, is still not on the radar to get redone. Again, just as I was about to stand, I had an e-mail come in of another accident, just today. The last time I spoke about the thirty-five-year-old pavement and the danger, people in the House laughed; it was funny. I called it the dalmatian highway. We had four accidents that week and again today. How long is this going to continue, Mr. Speaker, before somebody starts to take it serious?

Now, Mr. Speaker, given the time of day, I still have lots – and I very much look forward to standing again and continuing to raise some of the pressing issues in my district, but given the time of day, right now I will adjourn.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, are you adjourning debate?

MS DEMPSTER: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

Let the record show that the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair has eleven minutes and fifteen seconds left when we call the Budget again.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

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