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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start today's proceedings, I want to acknowledge a special guest in the gallery. We have someone of national notoriety today in our gallery, a young seven-year-old Ryann Fradsham. She has been acknowledged for her tremendous effort in having raised the most money in the entire country for Shave for the Brave. Ryann is accompanied today by her mother, Melissa.

Welcome, and congratulations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Conception Bay East – Bell Island; the Member for the District of Bay of Islands; the Member for the District of Burgeo – La Poile; the Member for the District of Mount Pearl North; the Member for the District of St. John's North; and the Member for the District of Mount Pearl South.

The hon. the Member for the District of Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize an exceptional young lady from my district who this past week did something exceptional and heartwarming for those faced with the challenge of battling cancer.

I speak of seven-year-old Ryann Fradsham, a Grade 1 student from Paradise who raised an amazing \$7,000 during the Shave for the Brave cancer fundraiser. Ryann raised more money than anyone else in the country during this year's Shave for the Brave, and drew a crowd at the Avalon Mall to watch this inspiring student show what caring is all about.

Supported by her parents who have instilled in her the desire to help others, Ryann made it clear on her seventh birthday that she wanted to take part in the annual Shave for the Brave. Her mother at first had some reservations about her doing this, but Ryann was adamant, and her parents felt they must support her.

Ryann raised money by developing her own fundraising page and asked citizens of all ages to make pledges. While her long blonde hair may be gone, it has been replaced with admiration, respect, and applause from all.

I ask all to congratulate Ryann on a great achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a member of the Corner Brook Off-Broadway Players. The Corner Brook Off-Broadway Players recently participated in the sixty-third annual Provincial Drama Festival held in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The players performed Edward Albee's play, *The Play About the Baby*.

Mr. Speaker, Ian Locke of Meadows was awarded the Thompson Trophy for best actor in any role under the age of twenty-one. Ian, a graduate of Templeton Academy in Meadows, is no stranger to performing, having been a member of the Templeton's Pallister Players Drama Club while in high school and a member of the Theatre Newfoundland and Labrador's youth group.

In addition to Ian's award, he also received two scholarships: the D.A. Matthews Scholarship and the Walter C. Chambers Memorial Scholarship, both valued at \$1,000. Ian is currently finishing his first year of studies of a Fine Arts degree at Memorial University, Grenfell Campus in Corner Brook.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in extending congratulations to Ian on a job well done and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise today to recognize and congratulate a former student of Grandy's River Collegiate in Burnt Islands, Ms Laura Francis, of Rose Blanche-Harbour Le Cou, and her classmate, Ms Krystal Hobbs, who recently competed in Canada's Next Top Ad Exec competition in Ontario.

These young women are marketing students with Memorial University who earned the right to compete by initially pitching a broad outline of their ideas. In Phase 2, they presented fifteen pages detailing their ideas, goals and strategies, and were part of the top ten selected to move on. In Phase 3, the team presented their campaign ideas to a panel of twenty-two marketing and business judges from major Canadian firms.

This is the premier marketing competition in Canada and has been running for seven years. There were a total of 141 submissions, and they were the first team from Memorial University to ever make it to the final round of competition.

As a result of their presentation, both Laura and Krystal have each landed internships with General Motors in Oshawa, Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in extending congratulations to these talented women and wish Ms Laura Francis and Ms Krystal Hobbs well with their careers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to today to recognize Raeleen (Dunne) Baggs, who has recently been inducted into the Newfoundland and Labrador Sports Hall of Fame.

Raeleen has been involved in soccer for decades, playing competitively for twenty-six years at the local, regional, and national levels. She has won countless MVP and All-Star accolades at all levels of play, and was also nominated for excellence in leadership, athletics, and academics while attending Acadia University.

Some of her highest honours include Female Soccer Player of the Decade for the 1990s, Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Association's senior player of the year for 1997 and 1999, as well as being inducted into both the Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Hall of Fame and the Mount Pearl Soccer Hall of Fame.

She is a role model for aspiring soccer players and Mount Pearl is proud to say that she is a product of our sports system.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Raeleen on this achievement and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: I rise to congratulate Jane Morgan, a member of the Canadian Home Builders' Association Newfoundland and Labrador, who last month was given the prestigious Gordon S. Shipp Award in recognition of her leadership, dedication, and continuous lengthy service to the CHBA at the national level.

Jane manages Nuport Holdings Limited, the company her father and uncle founded almost fifty years ago. Nuport is well known in the city and the Province, but the flagship of their company is Kelly's Brook Apartments. Nuport opened Kelly's Brook in 1971, and it continues to be a model development – as the company describes it, “A happy, thriving community of active, engaged senior citizens.”

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this description is justified. When I visit Kelly's Brook Apartments, and attend events there, it is clear that the tenants are enjoying life to its fullest.

The Gordon S. Shipp Award recognizes her contribution to the Canadian Homebuilders Association. It is considered a special achievement award, so is presented only at the discretion of the president, and is not necessarily presented each year.

I am not surprised that Jane Morgan was deemed a worthy recipient this year. I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating her.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand in this hon. House to bring attention to an initiative in my community which utilizes technology to enhance communications and provide for greater transparency and accountability to its citizens. Webcasting of public council meetings was first implemented in the City of Mount Pearl in February 2010, and allows citizens the opportunity to view live council meetings in the comfort of their own home. There is also an archive feature which allows an individual to view any previous council meetings at their leisure.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is yet another example of the innovative and proactive approach to governance which the City of

Mount Pearl is so well-known for in our Province. I would therefore ask all members of this hon. House to join me in commending the City of Mount Pearl on this initiative and encourage them to continue in their pursuit of municipal excellence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before we start Ministerial Statements, I just saw in the gallery – we have another guest with us today, Mr. Churence Rogers, who is the President of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador.

Welcome, Sir, to our Chambers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Ministerial Statements.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to acknowledge the outstanding achievement of seventeen-year-old Tiffany Thistle-Samson of Foxtrap, who recently earned the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. In addition to her leadership role as an army cadet, Tiffany has committed much time and effort into community volunteering and fundraising, contributing to organizations including the Children's Wish Foundation, Ronald McDonald House, the Terry Fox Run and the Royal Canadian Legion. Tiffany's altruistic work did not go unnoticed and led to an award nomination by a member of the army cadets.

On February 18, Tiffany was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal during a ceremony held at Government House. Tiffany is the only army cadet in Newfoundland and Labrador to receive this award and she is

certainly a deserving recipient of this prestigious medal.

A very special part of Tiffany's story is that she has been living with a loving and caring foster family for the past six years. In fact, it was Tiffany's foster mother who encouraged her to get involved with army cadets. With the support of foster parents, the social workers who maintain a collaborative relationship between her birth family and foster parents and mentor Joan Green within the career movement, Tiffany has excelled.

Mr. Speaker, we believe all children and youth who are temporarily unable to live with their biological parents deserve the opportunity to thrive in nurturing and supportive care, such as a foster family. Tiffany's success story embodies the message of our new Foster A Future... Foster A Child Today campaign. In this campaign we encourage residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to open their homes and their hearts to children and youth who need a warm and caring place to stay for a day, a week, or longer. Any person interested in becoming a foster parent can visit fosterafuture.ca for more information.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Tiffany on her award and acknowledge the wonderful support of her foster family. With plans to study psychology at Memorial University and continue her involvement in the cadet movement, Tiffany demonstrates that she is a bright and ambitious individual with a promising future, and we wish her all the best.

Congratulations, Tiffany.

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 would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

As we all know, this award was created in 2012 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. We want to express our sincere congratulations to Ms Tiffany Thistle-Samson of Foxtrap for her outstanding achievements and contributions in leadership roles. Certainly, Tiffany is a role model for young people all over this Province and it is right that we acknowledge her today.

Tiffany is also a foster child, which certainly added to the challenges she has faced. However, clearly she was loved and cared for by many within her family and the child care system. We must continue to strive for improvements in our child care system. We need to protect our vulnerable and allow them the opportunity to grow and reach their potential. As we did see in the three reports that were released by the Child and Youth Advocate, not every child is given the same opportunity and not every child ends up in a nurturing environment, through no fault of their own.

Clearly, Tiffany is doing fantastic. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I want to say congratulations on a job well done. We look forward to hearing of great things from Tiffany in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thanks to the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Congratulations to Tiffany on her award. Considering her extensive community involvement, this distinguished recognition is well deserved.

I remember listening to Tiffany and her mother, Tina, on CBC Radio's Morning Show last month and I was inspired by her energy and her spirit. I think we have to recognize the important role played by foster parents, but Tiffany's mother was also quick to point out the

support that was provided to their family by social workers.

I am an alumnus of the Canadian Cadet movement myself and I know how rewarding that program can be. I encourage Tiffany to stay involved and continue to take on leadership roles there. Again, I congratulate her and I wish her the greatest success in her studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement, I rise today to acknowledge April 21 to 27 as National Volunteer Week. This is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the great work of the volunteer and non-profit sector in our communities and our Province.

This year's theme, Let's Make Some Noise, is not only meant to thank those who give freely of themselves, it is also a challenge to others to consider how they can contribute and become active participants in our society.

Throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, the volunteer and non-profit sector is an important contributor to our social and economic development. These individuals and organizations bring together all stakeholders to discuss how they, collectively, can create opportunities with communities and regions. From municipalities, youth-based groups, chambers of commerce, to co-operative organizations, these volunteers are on the ground in all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador, addressing local needs and supporting the growth of communities and local economies.

With the upcoming municipal elections this fall I ask that individuals consider putting their name forward. Our communities and towns will reap the benefits and become enriched and stronger when people of different backgrounds, occupation, age and gender are involved.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are approximately 197,000 volunteers. These giving individuals contribute a total of 35 million hours of valuable unpaid time to our volunteer and non-profit organizations and their communities. Additionally, there are almost 23,000 people employed in the volunteer and non-profit sector in a concerted effort to make our Province stronger.

As a government, together with our partners and stakeholders, we will continue to work to support the continued growth and development of volunteer and non-profit groups, that in turn support community and economic development.

I ask that all hon. members join me in making some noise for our volunteers and non-profit organizations. Thank you for our hard work, commitment and dedication to your community and Province. Never forget, regardless of its size or impact, whether you help one or 1,000, your work and contributions are important and are indeed making a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, indeed, volunteers play a very important role in our society and our Province, and play a critical role in small communities.

In small communities we have volunteer fire departments, we have volunteer ambulance attendants, we have volunteer town councils, we have volunteer school councils, and we have volunteer boards operating development associations. Clearly, these small communities could not exist as they do and progress without

volunteers. We appreciate and applaud the efforts of volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to volunteers, I wish I could conclude on such a positive note with this government. This government has just decided to get rid of three school boards. That is forty-five volunteer trustees. In the past year they have gotten rid of nineteen Regional Economic Development Boards. That is over 200 volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, this government on the one hand while applauding volunteers, they have just given the backs of their hands to 250 volunteers in this Province. They said, here is the door, goodbye, get lost, we do not want you, you are not worth the few dollars that we pay to you.

Mr. Speaker, they say that a critic is someone who knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing, and with volunteers that is exactly where this government is. They know the cost of volunteers but they do not know the value of volunteers. It is pure hypocrisy to applaud volunteers while you are getting rid of them at the same time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I certainly want to congratulate our volunteers. They are the heart of every single community. Let's Make Some Noise is a fitting theme. Let's encourage our non-profits and volunteer groups to speak up about their needs and concerns without fear of losing their funding, as so many are under resourced. Groups like Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, Combined Councils of Labrador, and others should be able to do their advocacy work. Our volunteers deserve better.

Volunteers are incredible people. Their devotion, hard work, and countless hours given advance the social economy and we all benefit from this type of contribution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Member for St. John's South have leave?

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

MR. SPEAKER: On a point of order, the hon. the Member for St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the role of Speaker, and, in fact, for the job that you, as an individual, are doing in your role as Speaker.

I fully understand that a ruling of the Speaker is not open to appeal or debate –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Given where it appears the member may be going with his point of order, I think I should remove myself from the Chair and ask the Deputy to take my place.

Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

I recognize the hon. the Member for St. John's South, on a point of order.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I fully understand that a ruling of the Speaker is not open to appeal or debate. I will quote from Standing Order section 7(1), "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum and shall decide questions of order. No debate shall be permitted on any such decision and no such decision shall be subject to an appeal to the House."

Also, in Marleau and Montpetit, I just want to quote that. “Before 1965, there were several instances where the decision of Speaker was appealed and not sustained by the House.

“In 1965, as part of a series of amendments to the Standing Orders, the opportunity to appeal rulings of the Speaker was abolished.” The present Standing Orders prohibit any debate on decisions of the Speaker and prohibit the appeal of any decisions in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, we live in an age of social media. We know that members of this Legislature have been added to sites without their knowledge or their permission. The recent ruling is precedent setting, not only in this Province but the entire country. In fact, we have often used rulings made in other countries when making a ruling in our Assembly. The ruling can potentially impact each and every member of this House, as well as legislators in other jurisdictions.

I wish to quote from Beauchesne as well, which we have often used in this House. “§13. The Speakers’ rulings, whether given in public or private, constitute precedents by which subsequent Speakers, Members and officers are guided. Such precedents are collected and in course of time may be formulated as principles or rules of practice. It is largely by this method that the modern practice of the House of Commons has been developed.

“§14. The interpretation of both the written rules and tradition is in the hands of the occupants of the Chair, with their rulings forming a fundamental part of procedure. Some problems attach to these rulings. When the Standing Orders change, for example, rulings based on old rules must obviously become obsolete. More important, many rulings must be made with little opportunity for reflection or consultation. When possible the Speaker may defer a decision to give time for research and full consideration. Time, however, is not always available and unsatisfactory rulings may result.”

Mr. Speaker, I am not asking for an appeal of the decision because I know that is not allowed under our Standing Orders. While I understand

there is no appeal to a ruling of the Speaker, I do ask that the Speaker reflect on the precedence of the recent ruling with regard to media sites.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I have listened to the Member for St. John’s South make his point of order. While you did refer to some other authorities, I would refer you to our own Standing Orders.

In Standing Order 1.(2), where it says, “In all cases not provided for in these Standing Orders or by sessional or other orders of the House, the Speaker shall be guided by the following in the order in which they are stated: (a) the usages, customs and precedents of this House; (b) the Standing Orders and sessional orders and forms and usages, customs and precedents of the House of Commons...”

The point of order you are raising is actually covered in our own Standing Orders, so we do not need to refer to any other authorities on the subject. While you say you are not asking for an appeal, it is my understanding that the point of order you just put forward is in fact itself an appeal of a decision of the Speaker made on Tuesday of this week.

I wish to direct members to our Standing Orders. I would further remind members that the Standing Orders have existed for some time. They have been agreed upon unanimously over time as a collection of rules to follow in this House.

Standing Order 7.(1), in which it is stated, “The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum and...” no decision of the Speaker “...shall be subject to an appeal to the House.” However, in the event that the member is challenging and wishes to debate the continuance of the Speaker in his role as Speaker, that must be done by way of a written notice of a substantive motion stating the reasons for the motion and the remedy sought. This notice requires a mover and a seconder.

There is no point of order.

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There seems to be some confusion around the \$90 million loan that was announced to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper yesterday. The Minister of Natural Resources stated that the money would go to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, whereas his Premier, shortly after that, said that maybe not all of the money would go to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper.

I ask the Premier if we could get some clarification on what others companies she was referring to.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All, or substantially all, of the \$90 million that was referenced in our Budget, Mr. Speaker, will go to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper if they are able to successfully conclude their negotiations with their unions. It is conditional on that piece of work being concluded successfully before we will move forward with any endowment or loan of funds to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is all we were looking for was clarification that there was no other companies that were included, just indeed, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper.

Mr. Speaker, we do realize that this is an extremely sensitive issue and that many details are yet to be ironed out about the \$90 million loan. The details of this loan, as we all know, will impact the forestry industry right across the Province.

I ask the Premier: Will the Premier and this government provide some assurance that some of this money will indeed go to infrastructure upgrades in the mills so we can have a long, sustainable forestry operation in this Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's concern for the operations of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and the impact of the failure of this company on the forestry industry in this Province. We have challenging circumstances now, but if Corner Brook Pulp and Paper fails, the industry will be in dire straits.

However, Mr. Speaker, we are not prepared to talk about terms and conditions of this \$90 million until the agreement is successfully negotiated between Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and the unions. Mr. Speaker, when that is done, we will gladly share the details of this agreement, not only with the people at large but with the members of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the list of those fearing for our education system in the Province is growing. We have already heard from retired administrators, trustees in Labrador, Western,

Central, and, indeed, Eastern. There is the NLTA that has spoken out; the Federation of Councils are all concerned about recent Budget cuts.

I ask the Premier, once again: Will you please appoint a special committee to revisit these cuts, have a sober second thought that protects the best interests of our students and the education system?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of establishing a transition team that will be made up of members from the present board. We will announce that shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I just cannot get upset in debate with the people opposite any more. We, as a government in this Province, have invested that the quality of education and our commitment to education in this Province is exemplary, and you will not find it anywhere else in this country, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If there is any way to ruin a good investment, it is to make a bad decision. What we are hearing from many people across this Province today is that there has not been any consultation in this process, I say, Mr. Speaker. All we are asking for is sober second thought here.

Mr. Speaker, government is going full steam ahead without a proper plan or an education strategy. A long-time school board and trustee in Western Newfoundland, Paul Wilson, has grave concerns. He has been speaking out to the media that collapsing the school boards is an ill-informed decision; in fact, he is calling again for a study into the Province-wide education system.

I ask the Premier: Will you do the right thing, order a full study into the education system before we make mistakes?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Member for St. Barbe make a comment about the trustees. I can assure you that we, as a government, value the input of trustees. These are people who offer themselves up, Mr. Speaker, for the sole commitment of education to the Province.

I would ask that these trustees certainly provide their input. This is what the transition team is about, Mr. Speaker. When we put that team in place, it is about moving forward. Would the member suggest, as I have said time and time again, with a decrease of 17 per cent in students, 12 per cent reduction in schools and an increase in budget, is he suggesting that we take away from our students and put it into the management of boards? We are not there, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, the Minister of Education really do not want to go and answer the question. That is not what we are suggesting. What we are suggesting is listen to those trustees. They have a wealth of information; they have a wealth of knowledge. All we are saying is speak to those people first. Mr. Speaker, as I said, our preference is that you would revisit the school board amalgamation.

I ask the Premier: If this government intends on moving ahead with this decision, when would you introduce legislation to amend the Schools Act; and will you bring legislation into this

House so that we can have public input before we merge those school boards?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Again, Mr. Speaker, I see the member encouraging us to not move ahead, despite the lesser numbers in the system, and he is encouraging us to go on for an extended period with the boards as is.

Mr. Speaker, we, as a government, committed that we were not going to touch front-line services. We have kept intact our class cap sizes, Mr. Speaker. Despite what some members opposite have said, we have kept intact our special education supports. Everyone on our side agreed with the commitment to the front-line service, that being teachers and students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister wants to almost frame this up as it is one or the other. What we are asking for revisit this just like you did in Justice. Now, if you are going to go ahead with this decision, which it seems you are, well, at least you come to this House and allow the members here to debate the legislative changes that you are suggesting.

Will you make that commitment to do that, I ask the minister?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, exactly, it is one or the other. We, Mr. Speaker, decided to put it into our

students and our teachers, as opposed to a hierarchal administration.

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

MR. BALL: Well, it is nice to hear the minister – I guess it is unfortunate, actually, that he says it has to be one or the other. It does not have to be one or the other, I say, Mr. Speaker.

The Education Minister says a transition team is being formed to guide this process. I ask the Premier: Will you disclose who the members are and who will have the final say – indeed, will it be the Premier?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have already said we are going to put the transition team in place, and I have also said that those names will be made public very shortly.

Rest assured, the commentary and the input of the trustees – these trustees who are in place now will remain in place until August. Certainly, their input will be sought. We are about improving the education system in this Province, Mr. Speaker, and a quality education is our bottom line.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that our education system is heading in the wrong direction. The latest group to challenge government is the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils who came out today to appeal to government to reverse the cuts.

I ask the minister: Will he show he is willing to listen and call a round-table meeting with all

those showing concerns over his blind cuts to our school system?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, the Federation of School Councils, I am going to be speaking at their convention, I believe it is next Friday, in an effort to engage groups.

Mr. Speaker, we are not averse to meeting with any group. I have offered myself time and time again, and I have met with groups. There is nothing. This is about the betterment of education.

Mr. Speaker, despite what the member might want to think, we on this side value the input of our trustees, those who commit their time and energy for the students and teachers in education in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation, CDLI, has also been slashed by this bad-news Budget. CDLI's mandate is to offer courses to rural and urban schools.

I ask the minister, who claims that CDLI is an important part of the education system: Why would he cut positions by not filling vacancies in this important piece of our education system?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, one response. Since 2005, this government has put \$60 million into the Centre for Distance Learning and

Innovation. We are extremely proud of it. It is the leading edge in this country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, last week we heard a senior staff member displaced from Eastern School the Board has been hired as an ADM in the minister's executive office at the Department of Education.

I ask the minister: How can he justify adding another fat cat, senior staffer to his department when he has taken a chainsaw to the school boards in this Province because he claims they are too top-heavy?

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

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I will tell the member opposite that in our core mandate exercise, the area that we looked at first was our own department. He knows that through Estimates the other day.

Mr. Speaker, this position had been vacant for awhile. It is an administrative position that is responsible for curriculum. We need that person in place. The interview process, the proper protocols were gone through, and an individual hired. It is as simple as that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, one question to the minister: Will this newly appointed fat cat member of his department be part of his school board transition team, or did he just fill up a vacancy to cover someone who had a political favour owed to him?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to refer to somebody who is going to be serving in our public service as fat cat – I end my statement, Mr. Speaker. I end my statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier said on numerous occasions that it costs \$9,400 per person to study ABE at the College of the North Atlantic. She said it in the media on March 27, as well as on Backtalk on April 12. She says it costs \$7,000 more at the college.

I ask the Premier: Do you stand by those numbers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The ABE program in Newfoundland and Labrador is offered through three different venues: through the College of the North Atlantic, through non-profit agencies, and through private institutions. Mr. Speaker, we looked at the cost to this Province for the three venues in which we offer Adult Basic Education. We have done a comparison across Canada, and in particular within Atlantic Canada. Mr. Speaker, this Province spends more per student across the Province than any other province in Atlantic Canada.

This exercise that we have gone through, Mr. Speaker, is to help this department and this government do the right thing. The right thing is to be able to offer ABE to students who need it in the most cost-effective way to this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I never received much of an answer to that one, Mr. Speaker, so I will ask this question to the minister.

The minister has said publicly that it costs about \$5,000 more to provide ABE to a student at the College of the North Atlantic.

I ask the minister: Do you stand by that number?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we offer the ABE program through three different venues in this Province. It is the same curriculum that is offered, whether it is through a non-profit agency, whether it is through the College of the North Atlantic or through a private institution. It is the same student-teacher ratio. It is the same curriculum, Mr. Speaker.

We feel that when we look at the different venues in which it is offered, we need to make a decision that is the most effective expenditure of the taxpayers' dollars in this Province; yet, be able to serve the students of this Province who require the program and to ensure that the program we will continue to offer in this Province is consistent with the program that is being offered this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said \$9,400 and \$7,000 more. The minister says it is about \$5,000 more. Now we look at the Noseworthy report and it indicates that it costs \$4,800 per person to study ABE at the college.

I ask the Premier: Is it A, B or C?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, the numbers that we have to indicate the cost of Adult Basic Education in Newfoundland and Labrador is \$9,413 at the College of the North Atlantic, \$6,086 in a non-profit agency, and \$4,339 in a private institution. If you take the private institution number and you compare it to the number that we have for the College of the North Atlantic, you will get the \$5,000 difference that the member just mentioned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am glad that the minister is trying to address all the different numbers out there, especially the ones put out by the Premier.

What I would ask the minister: Are you prepared to table the numbers and table the working papers right here in this House of Assembly?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has acknowledged the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, as will be recorded in Hansard and will be able, I will repeat the numbers for the hon. member.

The cost per student to the College of the North Atlantic is \$9,413. The cost per student at a non-profit agency is \$6,086. Mr. Speaker, the

cost in a private training institution is \$4,339. That will be recorded in Hansard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I hear the answers that the minister has given but we have been contacted by a lot of people in this Province, people involved in the ABE program, people involved in CNA.

I ask the minister again: Are you prepared to table the working papers here in the House of Assembly?

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

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, I have indicated the cost that the department uses and the numbers, and the analysis that was done to indicate. We are not hiding the numbers, Mr. Speaker. I lay them out. I do not even round them off. I try to detail, Mr. Speaker, what we offer.

What is important for the people who are doing the Adult Basic Education program in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is that as we move forward and we look at the transition into next year, the students will continue to have access to the very same program that they are doing this year. Anybody who completes ABE this year, or starts a new program next year, their curriculum has not changed. The student-teacher ratio has not changed, Mr. Speaker, and we value the quality of that education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yesterday, the Premier made light of my question about the collateral that Corner Brook Pulp and Paper brings to the table if it gets a \$90 million loan.

This government loves to praise itself for its sound fiscal management, but even people who know little about fiscal management know that getting a loan requires providing collateral. In spite of all the help from government, the Kruger mill could close in five or ten years' time, after receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars from government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Is she going to demand nothing less than the Deer Lake power plant as the collateral from Kruger to cover the \$90 million loan?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I find the position of the Leader of the NDP absolutely incredible. Obviously, she does not understand again the structure, or she pretends she does not understand, although she claims to represent a significant portion of the labour movement in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am sure the people who work in the mill, the hundreds of unionized workers, would tell her how important it is for Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and the unions to successfully negotiate a labour agreement between them. They would have also emphasized to her how important this agreement is to the forestry industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. We need them to complete their work before we get into a discussion of criteria of a loan that might never be made.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Premier also acknowledged that the Province's forestry industry teeters on the brink of disaster. By her own admission, the forestry industry in Newfoundland and Labrador will collapse without the presence of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. As much as we all hope the mill will continue for a long time, we cannot run away from the reality that it probably will not without continued support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: What planning is this government doing to create sustainable forestry-related industries in this Province in case the worst happens; or will her government again be caught flat-footed with no plan?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if there is any flat-footedness in this House, the Leader of the NDP can claim it. Her need to know comes before anything else, even the success of a negotiation between Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and their unions. It comes before the health of the forestry industry in this Province.

We have made a commitment to the people of this Province that none of the money allocated in this Budget potentially for Corner Brook Pulp and Paper will be spent or will be released to them without the full details of the agreement being made public, Mr. Speaker. Then all the questions she has will be answered. If not, we

will be here in the House, hopefully, to answer them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, given the precariousness of the forestry industry in this Province, which the Premier has indicated herself, there are other related industries such as the integrated sawmill, biomass and value-added industry which needs support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I asked the Premier: Is her government working on other plans or is she content to throw taxpayers' money at the problem and hope for the best?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note who is following the discussion here in the House of Assembly during the last four years; I do believe you have been here all of that time.

We have had a \$28 million forestry diversification strategy at work in this Province for the last four years. Millions of dollars have been made available to companies like Sexon and Burton's Cove Logging to bring them into the current stage of innovation, enabling them to have the tools they need to compete effectively.

We have not heard you speak anything about that. What we have heard you speak about, though, is an investment in the Northern

Peninsula, a very high-risk investment in the Northern Peninsula, Mr. Speaker, because high risk is what you do if you have anything to do with forestry these days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In this year's Budget government has hundreds of millions of dollars committed to the pulp and paper industry and to Muskrat Falls, neither of which, either alone –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has recognized the Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am speaking about the hundreds of millions of dollars in this year's Budget committed to the pulp and paper industry and to Muskrat Falls, neither of which, either alone or together, can match the importance of the fishing industry which employs tens of thousands of workers and contributes over three-quarters of a billion dollars to our economy, yet with a department with its budget slashed by 33 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier why Budget 2013 does not show the same commitment of energy and resources into the Province's fishing industry.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, in her preamble, she condemns an effort to shore up and get a Sustainability Plan in place for the forestry industry in

Newfoundland and Labrador. Without knowing one word of the detail, she condemns it.

Mr. Speaker, she continues to condemn Muskrat Falls, despite the provincial support, the support of the people, the support of the unions, a project that will put \$20 billion in the Treasury of Newfoundland and Labrador, enable development in Labrador, provide the cheapest electricity rates to ratepayers in this Province, and tries to accuse us of a lack of support for the fishery.

That is not demonstrable; you should be ashamed of yourself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, government should be ashamed about their continued mismanagement of people's money.

In a release yesterday, the Department of IBRD announced it was buying shares in a company that has more liabilities than actual assets, putting the people's money at great risk. Buying equity is risky business and warrants higher returns. A dividend rate of 3 per cent is a sheer embarrassment.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of IBRD: Why did the government not extend a low interest term loan with first charge on security for the vessel to ensure protection of our tax dollars?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have said many times before, our government is leading in terms of any government in our past history in terms of

investments in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, whether it is the fishery –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Whether it is traditionally in our fishing industry, in our agricultural industry on the South Coast, \$100 million industry employing 1,000 people, or the ICT sector which is growing to \$1.6 billion. All over the Province, we are driving economic development.

We are not going to stop doing that. We believe in it. We just did a retool of our suite of programs at IBRD in response to those stakeholders out there in the Province telling us what they needed. We have our programs, over \$200 million in programs, tax incentives, to drive economic activity in Newfoundland and Labrador, driving the member's own district with tremendous investments we have made in his district.

It is time for you to start recognizing what is being done and clue in to Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is complete and irresponsible lending by the minister opposite. This company leases the Province's lucrative quota. Buying a stake in the company exposes the people to great risk, excessive liabilities, and costs for environmental cleanup. This is another fisheries giveaway and a gift of corporate welfare.

Mr. Speaker, why do the Minister of IBRD not consider using a more co-operative model of sharing this quota with fishers, communities, and the region to provide greater economic benefits to the people of the Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to stand here today and take a lecture from the member opposite about our investment and support for the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate in terms of job losses, but the Budget that we have provided for the Province this year is strong and strong in the fishery to support a billion dollar industry in this Province. Our support for Icewater Harvesting, just like we did in 2004 when we bought equity of \$3.5 million that is worth today \$16 million to \$20 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: You cannot stand and condemn a government that is out there trying to support companies and support economic development in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the Estimates Committee this morning it was noted that massive cuts to Environment and Conservation are cuts that they have been subject to. Some sixty-one positions have been eliminated, which vary from wildlife biologists to staff working with endangered species in the Province.

Question: With the potential for new industry in this Province from mining, Muskrat Falls, and West Coast oil, how can the Premier justify these cuts to Environment and Conservation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: I can see the irony in the question that has come across, because again, for a party that obviously, in listening to the questions that they put forth just then in this Question Period, they are against any type of development.

Really, when you look at it, I say to the hon. member, as I said to you in Estimates this morning, this government understands what it takes to get this Province on a sustainable future. We are doing it, and we are doing it right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: I do not think they have done anything right yet, Mr. Speaker.

Environment and Conservation also saw a budgetary hit with educational programming taking a really big one.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: How can we expect to educate our people about the environment and conservation if the educational aspect is being cut from the Budget?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Again, I say, Mr. Speaker, when we look at a core mandate in any particular department, we make sure that we can take care of the needs of that particular department. My officials came forward with a plan, and a plan that indicated we could move forward in a way that will satisfy that core mandate. We are doing it, and as I said, we are doing it right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

You have time for a quick question without preamble.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

How can the minister justify cutting back on the study of caribou at this particular time?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation, for a quick answer.

MR. HEDDERSON: I would say, Mr. Speaker, that \$15.2 million later we are in an excellent position to go forward and do what is necessary to preserve the very important herds, especially the one in Labrador. I say, Mr. Speaker, we have done what we had to do, to do it as we are supposed to do.

Again, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, I would be very remiss if I did not mention the tremendous investment that we have made in environment and conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

I want to take this time, also, to acknowledge in the gallery a former minister and member of this House. We have with us today the former Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Member for Torngat Mountains, Ms Patty Pottle.

Welcome to our galleries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, a petition to the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS with declining enrolment, distance education by Internet is now an accepted way to deliver educational services to students living in small communities; and

WHEREAS students have little to no say in where they or their families reside; and

WHEREAS many families do not have the ability to relocate so that their children can access educational opportunities in larger centres; and

WHEREAS many small businesses rely on the Internet to conduct business; and

WHEREAS high-speed Internet permits a business to be more competitive than does slower dial-up service; and

WHEREAS no high-speed Internet service exists in the community of Bird Cove; and

WHEREAS there are no plans to offer high-speed Internet service to residents of this community;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to partner with the

private sector and offer high-speed Internet service to Bird Cove.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of the petitions – primarily from Bird Cove and they keep coming in. These petitions in Bird Cove were originated by a sixteen-year-old high school student who I have never met. He contacted me back in the spring, very concerned about high-speed Internet. When I explained to him that the plan was that it should come and was expected to come to his area, he was satisfied but I asked him to check back with me.

Shortly thereafter, when it came to his area and did not include his community, he was absolutely mortified. He contacted me by Internet and asked if there was anything that he could do. He had heard I was presenting petitions for other communities that we knew were going to be bypassed. I explained to him that a petition is prepared, and he and his friends and his parents could circulate the petition and anybody who was interested in signing the petition, that I would present whatever petitions were circulated and signed by people to this hon. House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this is a voice for the people. They are critically aware of the need of high-speed Internet. I am certain government is aware of it. This community has been overlooked. I ask the minister, as does these petitioners, to strongly consider the very small communities that are left behind. If volunteers are important in a small community, for sure infrastructure, such as high-speed Internet, is absolutely critical in their ongoing viability.

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 Western School District is considering a multi-year plan to close the Bayview Regional Collegiate at St. Lunaire-Griquet in June 2013; and

WHEREAS it has been proven from students who have graduated from Bayview Regional Collegiate they have excelled in their studies to prepare them to move ahead and achieve their career choices; and

WHEREAS teachers and staff at Bayview Regional Collegiate are qualified and continue to provide a strong academic program with a full curriculum to all students attending; and

WHEREAS Bayview Regional Collegiate has developed a playground, library, drama club, Kids Eat Smart lunch program, school council, and other activities with exceptional community support; and

WHEREAS Bayview Regional Collegiate has housed a K-12 school in the past with 200-plus students who have had access to science lab, cafeteria, art room, computer lab, gymnasium, and extracurricular activities; and

WHEREAS the parents, business owners, social groups, concerned citizens, and students of the municipality of St. Lunaire-Griquet request to rescind this proposal since Bayview Regional Collegiate has met and exceeded all aspects set forth for a viable school;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to ensure that the Western School District is provided with sufficient funding to keep Bayview Regional Collegiate in St. Lunaire-Griquet open.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by quite a number of petitioners, constituents in my district, who are greatly concerned, especially in light of the Minister of Education talking about the

exemplary investments and despite their significant cuts. This decision was made in 2008, and has been pressed in the House of Assembly by my predecessor as an MHA. We continue to advocate and to urge others to get involved because this is a serious matter when it comes to the school and the community.

Since the last five years, we have actually seen an increase in population in this region. There is a common-sense solution where we could look at making vibrant communities where schools are economic drivers and hubs in regions. To look at all the cutbacks that have been made and the number of schools that have been closed down, we really do need to look at regions where there is that opportunity and there are sustainable populations. These are things we should look at.

This is five years in the making, where people have been asking for a meeting. They have been asking to re-look at this decision. They will continue to voice their concerns on this matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: 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, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS students of the Adult Basic Education program at the College of the North Atlantic do not wish to attend privatized educational facilities; and

WHEREAS the College of the North Atlantic has the most accredited Adult Basic Education program in Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS students are concerned as to the availability of private institutions and whether or not they can accommodate additional students;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reverse this damaging decision to students and reinstate the Adult Basic Education programming at the College of the North Atlantic.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand up here again today and enter another petition on this decision that was made on very short notice by this government and without any real forethought, if you ask my opinion. The fact is today I asked a number of questions on the cost of this and there seems to be some discrepancy, depending on who you ask and when you ask them.

The fact is that we need to have the working papers tabled that help formulate this decision. We cannot just rely on what is said here. There was a paper trail that led to this. There was a decision put together by somebody. I do not know if it was John Noseworthy, I do not know if it was the department, but we want to have a look at that. We are not the only people who want to have a look at that. There are a lot of people out there in the College of the North Atlantic writing to us. In fact, one just wrote to me during this session. I believe they wrote to every member on the other side of the House as well.

What I would suggest is when you get an opportunity, you all have a look at your BlackBerry, I would say to the Speaker, look at the e-mail just sent and listen to what this one person had to say. This is just one person who is writing, but there are a lot more of those people and those situations out there in the Province.

All we are asking at this point is that we have some reconsideration to make sure we are making the right decision. I look forward to seeing when RFPs come out. I look forward to seeing what is going to happen because we cannot jeopardize these people's opportunities to education, to put them into this labour market

that there is going to be a huge shortage coming up.

Again, I am seeing a lot of difficulties right here. I do not think the plan is in place. It seems like right now we make a decision and then we figure it out after, and that is an unfortunate way to treat education in this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS with the passage of Bill 29, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (Amendment) Act, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has weakened citizens' access to information and has reduced government transparency; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has moved towards greater secrecy and less openness; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is breaking its own commitment for greater transparency, accountability, and freedom of information, which it said at one time was the hallmark of its government;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to repeal the passage of Bill 29.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand in the House once again to present this petition that many people across the Province have signed out of grave concern for the issue of transparency and accountability by the government, and by government departments. Now more than ever

in our history this is so vital and crucial to an open, modern, and fair democracy. Particularly now in light of this austerity Budget which so adversely affects the lives of many, many people across our Province.

We are talking close to 2,000 job cuts – the disappearance of close to 2,000 jobs. This is not just jobs but it is people's lives. In light of this Budget, in light of the Budget that cut so many social services, it is imperative that we have access to information about core mandate reviews on which these decisions were made, that we have access to –

MR. KENNEDY: Liar.

MR. SPEAKER: I would ask the Minister of Finance if he would stand and apologize for his unparliamentary language.

MR. KENNEDY: I withdraw the comment.

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the minister to stand and apologize to the House.

MR. KENNEDY: I apologize.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In light of the evaluations on which so many programs were cut, it is imperative that we have access to that information. As well, Mr. Speaker, in this environment of intimidation of public servants, it is especially important that we have access to all information and all workings of this government as it affects the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have been asking of this government since they introduced this draconian and regressive legislation. Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that this government finally listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are absolutely against this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 humbly sheweth:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS moving services away from people who lack the means to travel long distances is

not in line with the Labour Market Development Agreement's principle of citizen-centered service;

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I tried, at some length yesterday, to explain how this government has mismanaged economic development in the Province. I talked about the spin, spin, spin, the constant spin cycle, that is indicative of the complete economic washout that this government has become or has sort of wrought on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Unfortunately, because of that complete washout, many of our citizens have been hung out to dry. Those people who have been hung out to dry are people who used to work in the fishing industry; I named I think almost a dozen plants yesterday that have closed. People have had to relocate to Central and Western Canada as a result of mill closures in the Province. Many workers who could potentially have worked in the third Hebron module or been working in shipbuilding on the Burin Peninsula or other areas of the Province, a lot of those people are displaced, unable to find work in those industries. I think one of the things that we need to do is ensure that these agencies.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

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 Regional Economic Development, RED boards, diversify, grow, and strengthen economies throughout the Province by providing training opportunities, marketing advice, proposal writing, leveraging funds, collaboration, and other means; and

WHEREAS the federal government's decision to cut funding to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA, is resulting in the elimination of funding to the RED boards and their termination in May, 2013; and

WHEREAS 75 per cent of the operational funding for the RED boards, roughly \$3.6 million, is provided by ACOA, with the additional 25 per cent from the provincial government; and

WHEREAS the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development, IBRD, has millions in their suite of programming, some of which has poor uptake; and

WHEREAS just 1.5 per cent of the Business Attraction Fund in the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development was used in 2011, \$366,800 of a \$25 million budget;

WHEREUPON we the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to commit to bridge funding in its 2013 Budget, which may come from the Business Attraction Fund to help preserve the RED boards in Newfoundland and Labrador that provide support to municipalities, communities, organizations, and businesses.

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by members from the community of St. Alban's on the South Coast of the Province. I had the opportunity to visit St. Alban's and look at the wonderful work that was being done. There was great concern by the development board there of the loss of

this and what it would mean to the community. They did a lot of great things when it came to the work that they were doing in the promotion of the aquaculture industry down there.

If I speak to the RED board in my own district, the Nordic Economic Development Corporation, they levered \$13 million in their sixteen years of existence, administered directly through their office. Now, their funding, what they received for their whole staff as a budget, in total, was about \$225,000. That is \$3.5 million, using provincial and federal funding to operate their offices for the last sixteen years, but they levered \$13 million directly. That is not counting everything else they did, and what that means to the overall economy in my district on the Great Northern Peninsula. It is quite significant.

They levered funding from the BRAND initiative through the federal government, which they put high-speed Internet in twenty-three of the thirty-five communities in my district. Actually, they served thirty-six communities on the Northern Peninsula through that initiative. The provincial government, with Bell Aliant at the time, they only contributed \$85,000. It is quite significant. These types of things are not going to happen in the same way.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: This is a backwards approach to economic development and a backwards approach to dealing with business in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but I do not think the current government gets it. The petitioners are urging that the House of Assembly make change and look at how we do regional economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 7. It is a motion, and I will read it into the record:

WHEREAS subsection 20(7) of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act provides that a change to the level of amounts of allowances and resources provided to members not be made except in accordance with a rule that has been first laid before the House of Assembly and adopted by resolution of this House; and

WHEREAS amendments to the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules which, in part, would change the level of amounts of allowances and resources, have been laid before this House by the Speaker;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House of Assembly adopt the amendments to the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules as tabled by the Speaker of this House on March 27, 2013.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is seconded by?

MR. KING: The motion is seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise as a member of the House Management Commission. I have been part of the discussion, of course, to support the amendments of the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules in accordance with the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act. I believe, Mr. Speaker, this reflects the discussion we had in the last meeting on March 20, 2013.

I really support this, not only in the scope of the current financial situation of the government, but indeed, I believe that as members this is something we should be looking at and analyzing on a regular basis, finding ways that we can represent our constituents and do the business of government in a cost-efficient manner.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks and we will be supporting this.

Thank you.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a member of the Management Commission, as well as House Leader for the Third Party, I am happy to stand and speak to this motion today. As has been indicated, it is something that is not directed by the Budget. This is directed by the Commission that was set up according to our Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act to look at members' resources.

Just to remind the public who may be listening or here in the room with us, section 16(1) of the act says that at least once in each General Assembly there will be a Commission set up, and that Commission will look at the resources of the members. Of course, we had that Commission set up in 2012 and the Commissioner, Judge Brazil, made her recommendations.

Some of the motions that are here relate directly to the recommendations from Judge Brazil and some are a result of making changes because of the fiscal situation which we are in here in the Province. I think an important one, and it is good for people to know about, is that we made a decision as a Commission to allow more for offices around the Province. Simply because of the fact the amount of money that was in our regulations, in our legislation actually, was so low that members continually had to come to get permission to pay more for the rent of their

constituency offices. It was becoming really ludicrous, all the permissions that had to be sought, so one of the changes here reflects to that.

I think it is important to say that this is something that is in the legislation. It is an ongoing process, and I think it is an important process that every General Assembly – that means in between the two General Elections, that period of time of a General Assembly. That we will always review how things are going with regard to the use of the money by the Members of the House of Assembly, and that the commission that does the study is a commission of people, up to three, who are outside of the House of Assembly. They are not part of the system.

It is a growing thing for us. This is all a result of the Green Commission and the report from that. Every time we do it, we will not do it again now necessarily until after the next General Election, although we could. We could call more than one, but at least once every General Assembly we will call one.

Even now, I think there are some things here that I will want to speak to the next time we have a commission, and I think that is the whole idea. It is an ongoing process. It is a continuous process, and I look forward to the next commission. I am happy to support our motion today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just have a couple of brief comments before we bring this to a vote. Certainly, on behalf of government we will be supporting this motion, but maybe a little bit of context would probably be helpful for Hansard and for those who may be paying attention.

As the Leader of the NDP mentioned a few moments ago, there was a process put in place, a

process that is outlined in legislation, where every term of office there has to be a review completed of members' compensation, benefits and allowances and so on, that each member who sits in this House is entitled to avail of.

In 2012 there was a Members' Compensation Review Committee put in place and that committee brought back a number of recommendations for the House to consider. On behalf of the House, of course, as people may be aware, there is a Management Commission with representation from all three political parties in the House.

The recommendations went before the Management Commission for consideration. We did that. We considered the recommendations brought forth, as well budgetary implications and other Budget-related decisions which are incorporated into the document that we are about to vote on here today.

That is sort of the how did we get here piece, Mr. Speaker. From a procedural perspective, people also need to understand I believe that in order to make any changes to the compensation and benefits provided to members, it has to come before the House. The Management Commission can give consideration to recommendations and offer suggestions to the House of Assembly, but it actually has to come here before the House and be voted on and ratified by members who are sitting here in the House of Assembly at that particular point in time.

With the changes and the recommendations approved in principle by the Management Commission tabled by yourself, the Speaker of the House, several days ago, today's debate is about those particular recommendations. I want to touch on just a couple; I will only take a couple of moments. It is important I think that people get a sense of what we are talking about here in the recommendations being brought forward.

As people would know, the Province is in a challenging financial position at this point in

time. We have had to make some changes in a number of important areas in government, a number of government departments. Not to be outside of any expenditure reductions, the Management Commission, as I said represented by all three parties, went through the recommendations not only with respect to the independent recommendations of the Members' Compensation Review Committee, but also with respect to trying to identify areas where we could make reductions in members' allowances and benefits to play our part in supporting the fiscal situation of the Province and the Budget of the Province.

There are a number here that I will just touch on very quickly. As has been referenced earlier, there was an annualized amount for constituency offices located throughout the Province. That has created significant challenges in some respects. In many areas, the amount identified as a flat amount was simply insufficient to cover rental space. It has forced members to have to write letters and make appeal to the Management Commission for exceptions to the rule.

What we have done now, by way of this recommendation, is we have made changes so that the individual MHAs who are having offices located outside of the capital region will simply go through the provincial government tendering process and follow all the rules and guidelines set down. There will be a provision to pay the actual cost of the tender, whatever that might be. That one is a good change and will support many members.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there is a couple of others that I think are important. Under office operations and supplies, which is really the amount of money that members have to run their district offices, to buy the supplies and the equipment and those types of things that are required to operate on a daily basis, there has been a 20 per cent reduction in this particular motion being brought forward.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, under the intra-constituency budget, which would be the budget that members would use when they are working

in their districts for travel or accommodations or other related activities, there has been a 20 per cent reduction in that category as well.

Mr. Speaker, just two other quick ones; we also made allowances where it was felt by the Commission, based on input received from the members that I will note in a few moments, that there was certainly some challenges and restrictions in a number of districts with respect to helicopter allocations and members' abilities to perform their duties in instances where there are remote communities.

Now we have a defined allocation for four districts: Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Torngat Mountains, and perhaps the most challenging one, I believe, before the Budget might have been Burgeo – La Poile. So, allowances are being made in these changes today to allow that member greater latitude and flexibility in carrying out his duties.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the last one that I will touch on is when the House is sitting, there was a rule that perhaps many of us felt that might have been a little bit absurd at some points in time, but when the House is sitting there are a number of MHAs who live within commuting distance of Confederation Building. The previous rules required that once a member came in here to attend a sitting of the House they had to stay at a hotel, even if they lived within a thirty-five or forty-minute drive, there was no provision to simply pay them travel expenses, which by the way would have been much cheaper on the public Treasury than having them stay at a hotel for \$130, \$140 a night.

There is now a provision here offering some flexibility. So if members live within a district that is outside of what is defined as the capital region, but if they live within a commuting distance and it is recognized to be cheaper to pay simply travel back and forth, a commuting travel amount versus paying a hotel rate, they have the option of choosing to do that. For the members who are going to be affected by that – and I think there may be five or six for sure perhaps – I think that they are all pleased with that because

at least there is an option there now if they want to return home at night.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to conclude my comments. On behalf of government, I want to thank members of the Management Commission from both other political parties who participated and for their anticipated support, as I have heard both the leaders offer already. So, with that, I will conclude my remarks and take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With that motion concluded, I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 1, moved by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Inaudible) was tabled in this House on March 26, so just before Easter. On a Monday after the House reconvened, I was given the opportunity, as the critic for Finance, to actually respond to the Budget. That response on Monday was almost three hours.

Mr. Speaker, near the end of that response, I introduced a non-confidence motion, which was seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile. Of course, the issue around the non-confidence motion for Budget 2013 – and I will just read it in again so we actually pick up on the debate,

where we were as of Monday of this week: That this House condemns the government for its failure to present a fiscally responsible program that addresses the immediate economic problems for rural areas of the Province, as well as serious social needs that exist in the Province, and its failure to create a climate of sustainable economic growth in the Province.

So, Mr. Speaker, we introduced this non-confidence motion, and with that in mind I will speak to that motion, I will speak in support of that motion right now. The reason why we do this is that we have seen a number of decisions that we would consider will actually set the economy of this Province back, especially in the short term.

Before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to the Budget. I guess what we need to do is sometimes we kind of lose sight of what the Budget actually spoke about before Easter of this year. So, Mr. Speaker, I will just go back to the Budget document. On Budget day, there is a lot of information that gets out into the public. One of the things, of course, is the Budget Speech that the Minister of Finance would read into this House of Assembly, and with that then becomes a very extensive document, which is the Estimates, which contains a lot of the details relating to the Budget.

The other thing, really there is a recap. In the Budget Speech the minister gave on March 26, which is entitled *A Sound Plan, A Secure Future*, there is a Budget Outlook. In that, it raises what it is as you forecast over the next three years.

The Budget Outlook, in revenue for this year, it is around the \$7 billion mark. In expenses, in terms of debt servicing expenses and program expenses, we expect to expend about \$7.6 billion or \$7.57 billion, which would leave a shortfall or a deficit in Budget 2013 of about \$563 million, Mr. Speaker.

If we look at the forecast for next year, it is important for us to do that even though the history of the forecast for this government has not been very good over the last number of

years, Mr. Speaker. We know it is difficult when you consider the volatility of oil pricing, production, and of course our currency rates. It is very difficult to forecast under those conditions.

The Budget Outlook for 2014 and 2015, the forecast for next year would be \$6.9 billion; leaving with program expenses of about \$6.7 billion and about \$880 million for debt servicing. That would leave next year's shortfall of about \$650 million.

In the third year of this Budget Outlook, Mr. Speaker, we are anticipating revenue of about \$7.8 billion, program expenses of about \$6.6 billion, and debt servicing of about \$931 million. Net expenses in the third year this government is forecasting about \$7.6 billion, which would leave a surplus of \$230 million. Of course, this revenue is all contingent on the revenue increasing from year two of this forecast to year three of about an extra \$1.1 billion. It is anticipated the revenue would come from future oil production.

Mr. Speaker, this is where we raise some concerns and a reason why we introduced a non-confidence motion about how this Budget really does not address the social and economic needs of the people in this Province. By that, I say this really started when you go back as far as last year with the Employment Assistance offices when we saw the closure. I think it was disturbing, and I mentioned this on Monday.

What was really disturbing about that decision was that we saw the announcement from the federal government saying they were going to close up those offices. We were really expecting, like some other provincial governments did that were affected by this decision by the federal government, which was responsible for 75 per cent of the funding and 25 per cent from our provincial government.

What would have happened, and I believe what happened in Nova Scotia, is they responded by coming in and trying to find measures where we could keep those Employment Assistance offices open, because they provide a very valuable

service to the areas where they operate. Indeed, what happened here is we found that our provincial government stepped out first and did not even take full advantage of the one year that was given to them by the federal government to look for other ways to offer those services.

AN HON. MEMBER: What offices are you talking about?

MR. BALL: The EAS offices, I say to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, this really comes on the Employment Assistance offices – of course, I had better go back to that because this is actually June of this year. The RED Boards is what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker. When we look at some of the decisions that have been around the Rural Economic Development Boards, we have seen, of course, many of those boards have already closed up now.

The other decision we seen, and we have had to question, would be around the school board amalgamation, Mr. Speaker. We asked some questions today in this House about how the school board amalgamation took place. Mr. Speaker, these decisions were made without consultation for the people who have been involved in this process for a number of years. When you look at school board amalgamation, we have had a history of downsizing from our school boards.

In this particular case, I think what most people found, and it was really difficult to believe, Mr. Speaker, because this decision was made by government without any consultation at all from the groups that were directly involved. We heard from many school board trustees. We heard from many of the people who have been involved with the school boards. They have provided a very valuable service, Mr. Speaker, over many, many years now.

What we have seen here, the government is proposing to put in a transition team that would take the English boards down to one, and leave us with one English board and one French board, Mr. Speaker. Of course, what we are receiving

now is a response from many people who have been directly involved. They really do not like the direction here. Many people are saying this will set back the investment that has already been made in the education system.

This government, on a regular basis, stand on their feet and highlight the investments they have made. The concern here is you make that investment and if you do not manage that investment appropriately, it will, indeed, set back some of the good work that has already been done, Mr. Speaker.

There have been many other cuts throughout all of this. What we have done is over the last number of days we have compiled a list of the number of cuts that we have seen by this government in this particular Budget 2013. I can assure you, the list is very extensive.

When you publish little pamphlets like this, Five Things You Need to Know about Budget 2013, there are so many things this piece of information does not say. This tells you about the five things you need to know about, according to government, Budget 2013, but it does not tell the full story. There are so many things this information does not tell you. Mr. Speaker, a lot of it is around consultation, as I said.

One of the other areas we have seen around consultation is in the whole area of the Department of Justice. Of course, the response from the cuts in Justice, they were quick and they were loud. What we saw here was a government that went in and reviewed those cuts, and they came back and made some changes.

As an Opposition, we called for a review of those cuts. Therefore, with the response that was made, we say in some cases here the review was definitely warranted and the changes were made. However, what we are not seeing, as in many of the other cuts we have seen, for instance with the College of the North Atlantic and on and on it goes, with our dental program – the many other things that we have seen, cuts in

this particular Budget, we are not seeing the same kind of review process.

In actual fact, what we have seen, Mr. Speaker, is that the Premier and members of this government are saying you have to come to us with that compelling argument. I say, Mr. Speaker, there are people out there making those compelling arguments and are more than willing to come with those compelling arguments and sit down with the ministers, and to sit down with the Premier herself.

What we need to know is when we come knocking on that door, that indeed the door will be opened, and that is not the case. That is not what these people are saying is the experience they are finding. What they are saying is it is very difficult to find a venue to make that compelling argument. We have heard that from people at the College of the North Atlantic, we have heard it from people in Wildlife Division. We have heard it from all over, Mr. Speaker.

What we have here, when you look at the Budget process – and we know there is a consultation period that feeds into the decision before the final Budget is put in place. In actual fact, what a lot of people are finding now is that the consultation process, in terms of having an impact or making a difference, Mr. Speaker, into the Budget is really meaningless. Many people engaged in this process are feeling they are not – even though they sit there, they go make a presentation, what is happening here is that they have no influence at all and no impact at all on the Budget.

It becomes very much a process of you implement and now you have to make the compelling argument; so you implement and then you consult after. That is not the way the Budget process should work. The compelling argument test should be almost reverse to that so that when someone comes in, you need to look at the information that has been provided and you look at the cuts that you are trying to make and then you say: Does this meet the compelling argument test whether we should cut this or not? In many cases, we believe that if that approach

was taken, that some of those decisions would not have been made.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I move on into some of those cuts, there is one thing that I wanted to clarify because we received a number of responses and questions about the Opposition and where I would be, as Leader of the Official Opposition in my capacity, on this \$90 million line that was in Budget 2013.

I want to make it very clear that we understand the sensitivity around the negotiations with a company that has been in Province providing many economic benefits, a lot of jobs to people throughout this Province, not just in Western Newfoundland but in Central Newfoundland for sure. Right now, what we have seen over recent years is that we have seen the closure of two Abitibi paper mills. What we have now is one mill that is left on this Island, which is the pulp and paper mill, the news print mill in Corner Brook. That mill, of course, has been around for a long, long time. As I said, it has provided a lot of economic benefit to the people in Corner Brook, but, indeed, all across the Province.

What we have said along here is there are times when governments must get involved with industry to support industries that are struggling, and that is not unusual. What you do in this particular case to protect the public investment is you go in and you look for things, you look for assets that you could take back, those assets that would provide the security on the loan. We have asked those questions and we believe that with all the negotiations that will take place, we encourage government to make sure that those assets are in place.

We have already seen in retirees and current employees that they have provided significant concessions, all in the hope that this mill would be around for the long term, which is what we all hope for, I say, Mr. Speaker.

So getting the proper security in place, making sure that the negotiations are completed, then what we look for is the repayment conditions on the loan because we have to protect public funds. We believe that there is a mechanism and

certainly the ability with proper, meaningful negotiations that this can be kept intact.

Mr. Speaker, that is the position that we have taken. What we all hope is that we will see a long-term, viable solution to this so that the retirees, the current employees – we will see a forestry industry in this Province that will have a long and healthy future.

We also know it is not just about a newsprint mill, that this newsprint mill is indeed the anchor of the forestry industry. What it does, in providing that anchor, that foundation for the forestry industry, it gives other people who are involved in the forestry industry, people like saw millers, logging operators, who actually provide a lot of employment throughout the Province – even our own forestry management, it is important. Because without a viable forestry to actually manage, you would even question what would happen here.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we make those strategic type investments from time to time. That is the reason why right now that we actually look forward to working with all the stakeholders that are involved in making sure that there will be a long-term and a viable solution to the forestry industry in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other things, when you look at Budget 2013 and the number of layoffs that we have seen – and, of course, we keep hearing every day of even new layoffs, people who have been displaced from their jobs. One of the comments that have been made about this so-called economy that has been white-hot or red-hot and that, therefore, the private sector would be in the position that it would actually be able to absorb – the private sector would be able to absorb the people who were laid off from our public sector employees.

Mr. Speaker, that is not always the case. That is actually a stretch to say that people can actually transition from a public sector job into the private sector. It is not always to do, I say. Mr. Speaker, as an example if you lose teachers or if you lose people who have been teaching in our

education system for many years, it is not always easy to transition into the private sector.

It is a big difference and a big stretch, Mr. Speaker, that people who are actually working within the public sector, working with government, providing a very valuable service, simply to say that the private sector can actually absorb those people. These are people who have made a decision over their lives; they have actually taken and they have planned their education to working within an education system, working within a health care system. Some of them have actually jumped at the chance, Mr. Speaker, when they were given the chance, to come to work within a government job.

What they have done is they have actually made decisions, not always because of the amount of compensation but sometimes about lifestyle, sometimes about pension. Now, we know that there are many people who have been displaced. We hear every day many, many stories of people who were actually shocked to find out they have been displaced.

I can tell you lots of stories. One, in particular, I know of is of an individual who had over thirty years with government and just made a decision a few years ago to go into somewhat of a managerial position. Mr. Speaker, of course, that kept him from the protection of his union. In this case, his job was displaced and he was really left with nowhere to go.

After thirty years of employment, many years under the organized environment, he now finds himself without a job. He is out of work. In his case, as I spoke with him and the story he has told me, what he has to do now is go west and go to Alberta, where we already know there are many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who have gone west because simply they just cannot find work right here in the Province, I say.

It is fine to say we have an economy that is vibrant right now in some areas of this Province. I know in my own district I have a large part of my district that really has an unemployment rate right now of well over 20 per cent, I say, Mr.

Speaker. So, it is not always easy for the private sector to actually absorb all those people who are working with government. It is not always easy to do.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about the closure of the EAS offices. I just need to clarify that because there was some confusion around the EAS and the RED Boards at the time. The RED Boards is what I was referring to that actually received the funding that was shared with the federal government. Those offices, the closures were announced last year, government being the first to step out of that and not come in, backfill, and actually support those offices.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: That is true, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Now we have seen those offices are being closed up and the EAS offices being closed up. The announcement was made on Friday, March 1. People were given a three-month notice.

Mr. Speaker, I say that I think there is a real misunderstanding of the value of those EAS offices and what they actually mean in the communities where they exist. If you go into any community where there was an EAS office, and I am not just talking about rural areas, too, we have seen very vibrant, very busy EAS offices in some of our larger centres. They provide a very valuable service. We know there were about 226 who have been laid off from that.

What they have been able to do is help people transition from where they are now, many people unemployed, and use those EAS offices to transform into meaningful employment. All of this when we are told each and every day that this Province will need about 70,000 jobs over the next few years for skilled people, Mr. Speaker. Now all of a sudden the very offices those people went to for support for education, to transform from where they are today in their life into meaningful employment, those offices no longer exist, I say, at the end of June.

Mr. Speaker, I did speak about school board amalgamation. Of course, this was one of the cuts that were announced in this Budget and one of the things that was not included on the five things you need to know about Budget 2013. This is not on this pamphlet that speaks to five things that you need to know. That pamphlet does not tell you about the amalgamation of school boards. Those five school boards in total now are going down to two school boards in the future: one English and one French. Now, what we lose are many people who have had a very intimate knowledge of the way our education system is delivered in the Province.

Mr. Speaker, one of the cuts, too, that was announced and that many people found out about during the reading of the Budget document itself on March 26 was the cuts to the College of the North Atlantic. I say, this came as a shock. 2013 is the fiftieth anniversary of the college system in Newfoundland and Labrador. With the \$15 million cut, we have seen \$4 million coming from program cuts, \$6.6 million from one program that we have heard a lot of feedback on – of course, this is the ABE program – and there is about \$4.4 million to come from cuts in management and administration.

The direct layoffs are one thing, Mr. Speaker, and this is having a tremendous impact across the Province, but I think what people are really, really speaking about the most, and what we are getting most of the feedback on, of course, is from the ABE program and the program itself. Now, there is a long list of cuts to CNA –

AN HON. MEMBER: Tell us some.

MR. BALL: Yes, I will tell you. Thank you to the member.

It is in Baie Verte, for instance. At the college campus in Baie Verte, we are losing the ABE program there and the first-year machinist program. Mr. Speaker, in Bay St. George we are losing the ABE program. Visual Arts, Hospitality Tourism Management, and Community Studies; these are all cuts to the college system and campuses across the

Province. We are seeing cuts in Burin, we are seeing cuts in Bonavista, and we are seeing cuts in Carbonear, Clarendville, Corner Brook, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Lab West, and Placentia.

Speaking of Lab West, for instance, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to a group out of Lab West. As they spoke about the Adult Basic Education, there are really not a lot of other options. Now what we have to do is wait for an RFP to come out. People really need to know where they would continue their studies. Already we are seeing many e-mails even as late as today where people are saying they will not be in a position to respond to those RFPs in a timely fashion. There are still some concerns about where we will be in September.

In Lab West, in Placentia, in Port aux Basques, in Seal Cove, in St. Anthony, here at the St. John's campus on Prince Philip Drive, and the St. John's campus on Ridge Road, I say, Mr. Speaker, there are cuts to every single CNA campus. Mr. Speaker, as MHAs we often hear from people in our districts who have concerns about this. We could speak at great length to just about every single program.

I want to speak about a program in Corner Brook right now for just a few minutes. This is the electronics engineering program in Corner Brook, Mr. Speaker. Just to let you know, this is a program that has been around for thirty years, the electronics engineering program, I say to the Member for Humber West. For thirty years, it has been offered at CNA and has been extremely successful. I have known many people who have graduated from that particular course. It was the only site that this course was offered in the Province.

It takes about twenty students a year, and about sixty students in the program, I say, Mr. Speaker. It is an actual general course that lays the foundation where people, when they graduate, they go on and they work with NAV Canada. I see the Member for Gander; many people are working in Gander with NAV Canada. People are working with Nalcor, I say. They are working in many, many areas in

technology and they provide a great service to the people. They come out highly skilled at a very foundational level. They go on through professional development in many, many companies, not only here in Newfoundland but across the country. It has had great success. This course has been very successful. There are many, many people who have gone on to work with Bell Aliant.

Mr. Speaker, to go in and close that program without actually speaking to the companies that the graduates end up with or actually speaking to the college themselves, the people who are directly involved in this, without even challenging those people with such a successful program, how can you help us provide solutions? It is really a very backward approach to finding efficiencies within the program. That is just one example; there are many, many more examples, I say.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what really makes this even a little worse? If we just think about graduates who are coming out of Level III right now, as they make their plans and as they actually put in their application to continue their education. I have had calls from people who have actually had applications into the college to do this electronics engineering course. Now the course is no longer available. So they are left now wondering, well, where will I go in September? The course they actually applied for does not exist anymore. This is what they wanted to do. This was a career choice that they had made.

I say, Mr. Speaker, this is a very shameful approach to this. At least what they should have done is actually sat down, had a consultation with the college, and sat down with the instructors who were involved in this to look for solutions, Mr. Speaker. We can make that same argument for many of the program cuts.

Mr. Speaker, if I could I will speak to ABE and about the many students who are left wondering what the future would be. We have heard a lot of discussion around the cost of ABE in the Province. We have heard numbers around the \$9,000 mark. Even in the House of Assembly

today the minister was quoting numbers of \$9,000 and \$6,000, and we know with the John Noseworthy report just over \$4,000. There seems to be a lot of confusion around what the cost is.

What we would ask, and we ask this today, and we would encourage this government to do this because in order for groups to get together to put that compelling argument in, to make that compelling argument so that we can actually work together to find solutions, we need the information. What we have been asking for is provide us with the information; provide us with the analysis of the information that was provided. Why did you make that decision? That is not too much to ask for, I say, Mr. Speaker. Table that, because we know there was no consultation with the people involved.

There was no challenge sent to the College of the North Atlantic to actually challenge them to look and come up with solutions that they could actually provide the ABE course in a more efficient manner, I say, because it is a good program, Mr. Speaker. We all have so many success stories about the program that has been offered at CNA and I could tell you dozens and dozens of them. We get those success stories on a daily basis. We would ask for this information to be made available so people can get together and they could actually review the information to, indeed, provide the compelling argument to keep this ABE at the College of the North Atlantic.

Mr. Speaker, in Question Period this week, one of the other things I brought up and we have seen a lot of discussion around is the Justice cuts. One thing we have not heard a whole lot in the public discourse is about the cuts to the RCMP officers. We understand there will be RCMP officers who have been asked to leave this Province. Yet, when I asked the Premier this week about that, she seemed to try and distance herself from this being related to Budget 2013.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at enforcement in this Province, all you need is to look back at the number of successful drug busts we have seen

on our highways. We look at the protection of our Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the communities they live. It is important that we have well-staffed RCMP officers and RNC officers. I would say we depend on that.

This is not an area we really should be cutting at all. Enforcement is important to us; I believe this is another area. We have seen the closure of the detachment in Buchans. We have heard of RCMP officers who are leaving rural communities or who have been asked to leave rural communities. This is a question, and we will continue to be asking questions on this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we move on, one of the other things that was not mentioned in the five things that you need to know about Budget 2013 was indeed some of the things around the Western Memorial Hospital in Corner Brook.

MR. JOYCE: Don't get me started on that.

MR. BALL: My colleague from the Bay of Islands says, don't get me started on that, because we know how passionate he is about the Western Memorial Hospital.

One of the things back when you look at the last campaign in 2011, when you look at the campaign material and you look at the discussion as we went about our campaigning, I would say, Mr. Speaker, there certainly was not any discussion about less acute care beds. I know people will try to make the argument that a lot of the beds in the hospital right now are being held because of people who need long-term care.

What is happening now, Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing here with this new hospital, nobody was saying in 2011 there would be less acute care beds; nobody was saying in 2011 that the PET scanner would not be an option, I say. In 2011, what I am saying now, did this government make a commitment to a PET scanner? Was this in the design? Indeed, now with the rightsizing, we know now this is not included in Western Memorial Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the new hospital that is being proposed at Western right now to replace the old building at Western Memorial, no one thought when we were into a campaign on this that we would be getting less acute care beds. This was not something that was talked about in this pamphlet here, in Budget 2013.

Mr. Speaker, we move on and we can talk about so many other things. The ambulance negotiations are an area in which these first responders right now provide a very valuable service. What we know now is that the negotiations, really, we are waiting for a review.

Mr. Speaker, if you are into any type of business at all, one of the things that you need to know is you need to be able to stabilize your revenue. If you are an ambulance operator right now and you are looking at the purchase of equipment, it is very difficult to be able to make that purchase if you really do not know where you are going to be. As we wait for this review to be done, what it does is it delays improvements. I have heard this from ambulance operators as they kind of wait for those negotiations to work. It is indeed delaying investment in the current services.

Those first responders, what they are looking for is a way that they can have consistent revenue so that they would be able to make those decisions, so that all of us from time to time - many people we know who unfortunately from time to time would need the services of those ambulance operators - could depend on a good service, where there are investments made to make sure that the quality of service remains in place.

Mr. Speaker, this is not in Budget 2013. This is not about one of things that this government considers you need to know. It is something I believe that, as ambulance operators, they should not have to wait. When you are in negotiations, when your contract expires, there should be expedient negotiations -

AN HON. MEMBER: How long have they been waiting?

MR. BALL: They have been waiting a long time. It has been delayed well over a year, I say, Mr. Speaker, right now.

Mr. Speaker, another area that we received significant feedback from is the Wildlife Division. This is another enforcement issue. We already know that many people who live in our Province, they make a decision to live here, a lot of people, because of lifestyle. We know of many people who have moved away and they come back home. They come back home because they enjoy the lifestyle in Newfoundland and Labrador. They love the outdoors. We all have friends who enjoy their summers, if it is salmon fishing on the rivers, or in the fall it is up moose hunting, or just days out in the country. They also enjoy knowing that there is an abundance of wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago there were some decisions that were made by this government to separate enforcement. That moved into Justice. Then we saw the wildlife management which was in Environment and Conservation, Natural Resources, those areas. What we have seen here and what I want to speak about today, though, is in the enforcement piece.

When the department was set up we had seventy-two positions that were set up. Fifty-four positions, I understand, Mr. Speaker, had been filled which left really eighteen positions vacant. What has happened after Budget 2013, we are now down to about twenty-four positions in this Province. We now have about twenty-four field officers really out of the seventy-two that were originally approved.

When you think about this, how do you realistically believe with this amount of field officers that we can put in any kind of meaningful program? This is what I am hearing from people. We have heard many people speak about one wildlife enforcement officer from Rocky Harbour to the Northern Peninsula. It is not even a safe environment I say, Mr. Speaker, for those wildlife enforcement officers to be even working. They cannot put a meaningful program in place, and they are not able to put the type of enforcement measures in place. Who

would go out at night on an enforcement patrol if you had to do it yourself? As a matter of fact, I am not even sure that workplace health and safety would even allow that to happen.

Mr. Speaker, yes, it is often referred to as a poacher's paradise. When people make the decision to come back home because of the abundance in wildlife, the lifestyle here in the Province, cutting back on our wildlife enforcement and our wildlife management is not an area we need to go. As a matter of fact, when you think about the decision that was made even by this government to protect the inland fishery, they felt that DFO was not doing a good enough job so they got directly involved in that themselves.

Mr. Speaker, what I also found interesting is when you go back to the Blue Book in 2007; one of the commitments that Blue Book 2007 made was to enhance data collection, assessment and management of wildlife resources. If you want to see better management of wildlife resources, if that is your commitment, how can you expect to do that with less enforcement officers? It is impossible to do that.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that we have seen this government make commitments. I just want to go back to it because I just want to finish here. I should have done this when I spoke about the ambulance negotiations. Blue Book 2011 –

AN HON. MEMBER: The last election.

MR. BALL: The last election.

What did Blue Book 2011 say? It says this: We will undertake a comprehensive review of emergency services throughout our Province, including our ambulance services, ambulance operators, emergency responders, paramedics, other services and personnel.

Now, did anybody believe that when people were knocking on their door in 2011 that we would be standing here today in 2013 and this review not completed? That was never the case. Again, Mr. Speaker, 2011, it is still not

completed. We do not even know when it will be completed, I say, Mr. Speaker.

We have issues around wildlife enforcement and wildlife management. We have people who have left the wildlife management division, people who were out there protecting many of the valuable resources that we have in our Province.

There are so many other cuts that affect people in Newfoundland and Labrador. There are too numerous, actually, and I will never get through all of them. I have a full list of them here. These are all cuts in Budget 2013 that are not mentioned on all the things that you need to know.

Mr. Speaker, in Tourism, Culture and Recreation, I want to read back the Blue Book which was really started in 2007. It says here, in 2007 – this was a commitment that this government made to Tourism, Culture and Recreation largely around advertising. Having nearly doubled the Province's tourism marketing fund from \$6 million to \$11 million – this is Blue Book 2007; they are claiming to have doubled since 2003. Now they are saying that they will continue to increase tourism marketing investments by at least \$1 million a year, ensuring that we match or exceed the investments by the Maritime provinces. That was the commitment made in 2007.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what do we find in the Budget 2013? We have taken \$4 million out; we have now set us back to around the 2009 levels.

We have stood here in this House, Mr. Speaker, on many, many occasions and supported the investment into tourism because it is a way to revitalize rural Newfoundland. It has made us all proud. I know I have felt proud many, many times when we sat on an airplane or we sat in a room somewhere and we see those ads come up promoting rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It has made us all proud. The decision here, really, going back on the commitment in 2007 to include \$1 million extra a year, now that is setting us back.

The other commitment is that they would ensure us that we would match or exceed the investment by the other Maritime provinces. What I am hearing now is that we are probably not where Nova Scotia is right now, based on this decision.

We have seen many, many other changes, many, many other things that will impact people in Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of Budget 2013. Liquor licensing fees – that that is an area now where in the past we have seen our Newfoundland liquor commission and the outlets they would have in communities. What did they do? They actually paid their taxes and they paid their fees to communities. Did any community that I know when they were doing their budget this year expect that the Newfoundland and Labrador commission would remove their fees and cut their fees? They did not know that, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2013 allowed that to happen, though.

What we have seen right now is that as a result of Budget 2013, the Newfoundland and Labrador commission outlets that operate out of communities have now cut their funding from the communities they do their business in. There are many, many more examples; no consultation with the communities involved.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many other things. We could talk about the impact of the cuts on the economy. I know small business operators, especially in rural areas, who are already saying this is having an impact on their business. People are reconsidering purchases, whether it is furniture or renovations of their houses that are often overdue. They are actually taking a second look. This is what happens with the ripple effect when you make those decisions and the impact it would have on the economy of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, there have been many changes that impact many peoples' lives. Often, as we have raised questions over the last couple of weeks, we have been accused of saying we are not standing up for the employees, we do not do this, or we do not do something else on behalf of public sector workers. That is far from the truth.

That is so far from the truth. We actually value very much the work that our public sector employees do on a day-to-day basis.

I will tell you that this government made a decision in February of this year, 2013, about permanent status. It was included that if you worked for a period of time, your eligibility to a permanent status – you would become permanent. This would give you some extra benefits when it comes to bumping across departments.

In February of this year, that was actually changed. This is something that we have heard from people who work within government. We have seen people now who were not given permanent status, which really now removes some of the benefits they would have had, given this situation we are currently in with the hundreds and hundreds of layoffs we are seeing across the Province. So, Mr. Speaker, no one was telling those people about the permanent status; there was no consultation at all. This was just a decision of this government.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is when tough decisions are made and people are laid off – there was a story that was told to me over this weekend. It is that they have not felt that they have been respected; they have not felt that they have been treated in a professional manner at all. Indeed, what we have seen is people scheduled meetings that lasted just minutes, and then they were told to leave their keys on the desk or they were out the door.

Mr. Speaker, this is not indeed a very professional and a caring way to treat people who have provided valuable services for many, many years. This is what has been happening over the last few weeks. We have been through some difficult times, and one of the things that many of the displaced people have told me is that they have not even been offered a priority for re-employment within this government.

Mr. Speaker, there are some very basic things here that need to be, I believe, when you look at the layoffs that we have had to deal with here,

that we need some review in actually how we care for our employees.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the spending, this government has blamed past Administrations for many of the decisions and for many of the things that have happened in this Province over the years; but there is one thing they cannot do, is blame any Administration at all for the current financial situation of this Province, not at all. There have been many, many warnings over the last few years. I mentioned when I spoke last about Scotiabank, we talked about economists have been telling this government for many, many years.

Now, one of the people that this government used in the last few weeks, prior to the Budget, was the economist, certainly in this Province, well known, and that would be Wade Locke. Ironically, in June 2011, Mr. Locke gave a report to the Harris Centre – and I did print off a copy of this over the weekend, Mr. Speaker. This was called, A Prosperity Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador: Defining the Realities and Framing the Debate. This was given to the Harris Centre on June 8, 2011.

So when you look at taking advice and consulting with people, the very same person who came into the Department of Finance to provide advice for this Budget 2013 was out there in the public arena back two years ago telling people in this Province that we had to put a plan in place.

MR. JOYCE: What did he say?

MR. BALL: Well, there were a lot of things. One thing he did say is that change is never easy. If you remember his comments from just a few weeks ago, he said we had to be very careful that we not make those changes too quickly because that could, indeed, do what? It could set the economy back. He did say the financial situation needs to be dealt with and we have about five to ten years. He did say we have to plan.

We have heard from many, many people who have been involved, who have received layoffs,

and many of the school board amalgamation, I just mentioned. Was there any consultation? None at all. Was there any planning? None at all, Mr. Speaker. This was in June, 2011, when this government then was giving a warning.

Part of the plan, too, we also mentioned was to – here is a word: consult broadly to define priorities, consultation. This is the same guy who fed into this year's Budget. He was recommending to do what? Consult broadly, identify the opportunities, identify the constraints, develop a plan, capitalize on your opportunities, minimize the significance of the constraints, outline how best to meet the established priorities for the current and future generations. This was two years ago.

How should we plan? This was the third suggestion. He said this may require implementing a debt retirement strategy, establishing a heritage fund. This was Mr. Locke, the same guy this government used. He has provided some very valuable information. This was the same guy who was used to help government form this Budget 2013.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that has really changed when you think about 2011 from where we are today is that we now know, based on the forecast in 2011, there is no expectation that the global price of oil will be where it was, even from where this was being forecasted for just two years ago. Even this expectation has changed a bit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these are warnings, as I said, of about two years ago that were put in place by Mr. Locke. As we know, he is certainly well-known everywhere across this Province. He has done some great work. I know he has done some great work for many professions. Right now, I know the Department of Finance use this. I know there are lots of other associations and professions that have used and have taken the advice of Mr. Locke.

What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is what he is suggesting here is that we needed broad consultation. That consultation did not happen for Budget 2013. We need to plan for the future.

We do not need to face a crisis but we need to plan to avoid one. We have to deal with the constraints realistically and capitalize on the economic opportunities, Mr. Speaker, hardly what we have seen in Budget 2013.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on, I have a few minutes left. There are many, many cutbacks that we have seen in this Budget that have not been told. I will say as Leader of the Opposition, as an MHA, and I know all members are receiving e-mails on a daily basis from people who have been negatively impacted by Budget 2013. It is almost like a dark cloud has been over this Province. People are in a sombre mood when they do not even know the true impact of Budget 2013.

Mr. Speaker, we have had what many people believe is once in a centuries opportunity in the last ten years to take advantage of the windfalls of revenue that we have had from oil. There is no question that we have been very lucky, because those budget surpluses we have had, these surpluses are not as a result of any decisions that have been made.

In 2007 and 2008 we have seen a tremendous spike where oil has made a significant contribution, not because of any planning, not because of any good work. It was really luck that made that happen.

MR. JOYCE: Those 8 million barrels they found.

MR. BALL: The Member for Bay of Islands reminds me, yes, they found 8 million barrels back in –

MR. JOYCE: Jed Clampett over there.

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, make no mistake, there is still a lot of rebuilding to do in this Province over the next few years. Even though right now there is a sombre mood around this Province, we need not lose hope here. We need not lose hope as a Province. There is a way with proper management, with planning, with sitting and speaking and listening to the people of this Province, not dismissing their arguments, not

really dismissing them, Mr. Speaker, that this Province will rebound from where we are. People want to know.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, people are talking about a plan. The minister opposite, the Minister of Natural Resources was talking about: What is our plan? Well, when we go back over the plan of this government, there has been no planning. Everybody is telling us this, Mr. Speaker. There has not been any planning at all. What you have done is – we have seen a number of elections in 2003, in 2007, in 2011 – you say one thing and not deliver.

Here we are, Mr. Speaker, as I get to the end of my comments on Budget 2013, we do know there are many opportunities that we can see within this Province. As a result of this particular Budget, there is, especially amongst our public sector unions right now, people are – if there is anything that we have lost is the confidence. What we have seen is the loss of confidence in the people of this Province. People are really the energy, the ingenuity. They feel now: What will be the next steps for us?

People want to know a plan, and people will get a plan, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you what; our plan will include meaningful consultations with the people of this Province, people who are out there on a day in, day out basis who are working in this every single day. They have solutions. This government dismissed those people. They really did not listen.

The college is one example of this. The school board amalgamation is an example of this. People who are working in Wildlife are an example of this. People who are working in Justice are an example of this. RCMP officers are an example of this. People who are working in our health care institutions are examples of this. There are examples in our community leaders. There are examples around this Province everywhere, Mr. Speaker, of people who could provide good, meaningful consultations. They can provide solutions to the problems we face today, but that did not happen.

That is not what happened with Budget 2013. Those people were dismissed. They were not listened to. Right now, they have lost confidence in this government. We are seeing it each and every day. Mr. Speaker, all I have to say is that the MHAs all over this House, especially those in government, all you have to do is read your e-mail and you will see example after example of people who are losing confidence in the decisions of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks by saying that indeed we are at a crossroads within our Province right now. There will be decisions that will have to be made. As we get closer to the next election, people, I believe, will take a look at what that decision will be. Who do they want?

What we have seen right now is a government that is really not coming at all with anything new. They have run out of people. They have no one else to blame any more for their decisions. They do not want to take the responsibility for the decisions that they have made. These are decisions that they have made.

When they talk about reducing the public sector, you would not know but these people walked in, sat in a chair, and said put me on the payroll here. You would have expected at the very least when people were hired by this government that they knew that when they were making that decision that those positions were financially affordable, not only for three or four years, but they were financially affordable for a long time, Mr. Speaker.

People were told to come home. I have friends of mine who were working in Alberta who were recruited to come back home, I say, Mr. Speaker. Coming home just five and six years ago and they have six years employment with this government. What happens now? Just a few weeks ago they were told that their position no longer exists. Now they are out the door looking for employment – where? They are looking for employment in Alberta.

This is not what we expected. This is when we were at a time that this was supposed to be the

best of times. This was supposed to be when we were flush with cash, I say, Mr. Speaker. This was the best of times in our history. Now we are here downsizing the public sector, cutting services and cutting programs, and doing all this without speaking to the people who are engaged and involved in those programs.

No consultation at all, no planning, I say, Mr. Speaker. Then they get up and they tout a Sustainability Plan for the next ten years that can really get you – go look at the Sustainability Plan, Mr. Speaker, on page 11, I think it is, and you will see about four points. They are very, very specific in how they plan to transform the economy in this Province. Not there at all, I say, Mr. Speaker –

MR. JOYCE: Population growth.

MR. BALL: Yes, with the population growth the Member for Bay of Islands reminds me. Mr. Speaker, as I said, this Province is in a crossroads; this Province is right now at a turning point. I look forward to more debate over the next coming weeks, I say, Mr. Speaker, and listening to members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, this has been my fourth hour –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: I would like to conclude my fourth hour now and my remarks to Budget 2013. I have put the non-confidence motion out there, Mr. Speaker, because I really do not believe –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: – that Budget 2013 in any way at all will make the necessary changes to transform our economy and meet the social needs of the people of our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having more opportunity over the next couple of weeks to speak to and again respond to comments from

the members opposite on Budget 2013. With that, I conclude my remarks.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, like all who stand in this House, it really is a privilege to have an opportunity to speak to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and particularly on this very important bill. We realize we are talking about the Budget here and, in particular, a non-confidence motion of all things in our Budget, Mr. Speaker. What we are hearing from the other side is all that they do not want to vote for, all that they want to deny the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will outline some of that in a little while as I start to move through some of the comments that I am going to make here this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, the process of actually going into Budget preparation is a very difficult process for all. When we sit in our departments to look at budgets it is not something that we do over a few days, a few weeks even. It is a long, long process where we take time and we absolutely do listen to people. I have heard some commentary from the other side about how we did not listen, how we did not consult, how we just sat around – people must assume that we just sit in a room with a pencil and go in, out, in, out; it is not the way it happens, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the decisions that we have had to make around this Budget have been exceptionally difficult decisions, Mr. Speaker. We make them because we are concerned about this Province. We are concerned about our children and our grandchildren. We are concerned about providing for them a sustainable future in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, many of our decisions were difficult, but they were always based on principle. The principle had to do with ensuring that future.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that more than any other that I have ever seen, this Premier, when we sat around with her to discuss some of our final recommendations, went back time and time again to say: What does this mean for our children? What does this mean for our grandchildren? Mr. Speaker, those were some of the principles that we adhered to in this Budget.

Lots of times it is really easy to be popular, Mr. Speaker. We had a choice in this Budget. We recognized a very, very difficult deficit was looming for us. We had a choice to ignore that or to take it head on and to do something with it, so that our young people – I look at the Pages here in the House of Assembly, so that they can have a future in this Province, Mr. Speaker. Those were the reasons that we made the choices that we made. We could have said: We will ignore all of that, we will do what continues to make us popular in this Province, and we will just continue to spend, spend, spend, and spend. If we were to do like the NDP, then we would tax and tax and tax and tax to pay for that spending, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, after we had that done, then they would spin it all out one way or another and it would still have nothing to do with the facts. No, Mr. Speaker, we relied on principle and we said that based on values of ensuring that this Province would be in a better position than where we found it, that we would not take it back to a larger deficit. We found it at \$12 billion worth of deficit; we cut that by one-quarter, down to \$8.9 billion, I believe – the minister can help me with that. We made those differences and we made them because we really do believe in the future of this Province.

We see the other side of it as well. We know we only have to bite the bullet on this for a couple of years and that we coming out the other side of this and making and having that future. We see the 70,000 jobs that are out there, Mr. Speaker.

Those were some of the things that guided us on the process. I only have sixteen minutes left because I really would have liked the opportunity to get further into how a Budget is developed so that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador understand that.

When we talk about consultation, the Minister of Finance did go across the Province; he did consult. People said to us: We do not want to increase taxes. So, we did not. They said: Do not hit the front lines of health care. So, we did not. They said: Do not go into our classrooms. We did not. We honoured what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador told us through those consultations, Mr. Speaker. Again, that had something to do with our principles and our values of listening, of consulting, and of seeing it all through.

Mr. Speaker, in our Province today we have more people than ever before working. In fact, employment growth in our Province, last year, was second only to Alberta. Whenever did we think that we were going to be able to talk about that: employment growth in our Province second only to Alberta? Consumer spending is up in this Province, Mr. Speaker. Housing starts are up, capital investment is up, and personal income is up. Guess what is down, Mr. Speaker? What is down is that families are paying a half a billion dollars less in taxes than they were paying a decade ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: That is what is down, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that did not just happen. That happened in the same way that this Budget happened. It happened through planning; it happened through sound fiscal investment, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the industrial development, such as Muskrat Falls, Voisey's Bay, the growth of small and medium sized businesses in this Province in all regions of this Province, I believe that it is very clear that the future of Newfoundland is bright.

Mr. Speaker, when we took office, we did inherit a very significant deficit; I made reference to that already. We took it on. We decided we were taking that on. We were finding a way to make smart, strategic investments so that we could find a way for the future.

Mr. Speaker, the road that we took, the pathway that we went down, made such a significant difference that people like Mark Carney, who is the head of the Bank of Canada now and will be very soon the head of the Bank of England, said that Newfoundland and Labrador is a model for the rest of the country and that the rest of the country should take note.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: It is significant, absolutely significant, when we have people like that telling us that in fact we are doing it the right way, that we are making reasonable, sensible investments, Mr. Speaker; investments like the billions of dollars that we have spent in roadwork across this Province, in new hospitals, and in new educational facilities.

Mr. Speaker, then sometimes over on the other side now in the last little while we hear them saying, you should not have spent all that money. Well, Mr. Speaker, as I have heard our Premier say here in this House of Assembly on many an occasion, and several other ministers who stood, you tell us what hospitals you did not want us to build. You tell us what schools you did not want expanded or built. You tell us what roads you did not want done. What we heard was all of that was necessary because we inherited a crumbling infrastructure that had to be rebuilt, and rebuild it we did. We are proud of that; we are never stepping aside from that. Again, it was done based on principle.

We made all kinds of investments across this Province that I think the people of the Province recognize, and I hear on a regular basis that people recognize it. I hear people on the other side of the House talk about all the e-mails they get and about all the phone calls they get. Well, Mr. Speaker, we get them too. Quite often I get

e-mails and phone calls that say thank you, particularly in terms of our health care system, when they talk about the great care they have received and when they talk about the fact that they were finally able to get dialysis in their own communities where they could not before. All of those sorts of investments we have made that have made a difference in the quality of their lives. We get those e-mails; we get those phone calls. We do not stand up in the House every day and talk about them, however, because that is what we should be doing. We should be investing in the future of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe that responsible management has made us the government that we are today, and I believe that it is making a huge difference in where it is we are going tomorrow. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador get it. They know that we have a plan and that we are working the plan. They also know that we have some difficult moments ahead and they accept that. Every government across this country is experiencing that, with the possible exception, I would suggest, of maybe Saskatchewan. When I go across the country to meet with my counterparts in Health and Community Services they all tell me the same things. In fact, in many cases they tell me how envious they are of what we are able to do here, particularly around health care and some of the initiatives that we have looked at in this area.

Mr. Speaker, again, I would suggest to you that what we are doing here in terms of our government, in terms of our spending, and in terms of this Budget is not something the people of the Province do not have any confidence in at all. In fact, I think we are ensuring that our spending is at a sustainable level for this Province. We have two paths before us, as I said, and I believe the path we are on will inevitably lead us to where it is we need to be and we want to be.

Our Sustainability Plan, Mr. Speaker, the 10-Year Sustainability Plan, is one I think everyone should read because it clearly sets out what we are doing. Year one of that plan is focusing on deficit reduction. We have to focus on deficit

reduction. What do we do, ignore it? Say to the people of Newfoundland, as other governments would have done in the past, we have a deficit, but we are going to ignore that; we are just going to get out the old credit card and continue to spend? What odds, sure, our children can look after that. No, Mr. Speaker, not this government; that is not where we are going. We are making the tough decisions, but having said that we continue to invest also.

Year two of that Sustainability Plan will look at some more reviews that need to be done, Mr. Speaker, so we can find better ways, more efficient ways, and more streamlined ways to spend the taxpayers' money. So to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are out there listening right now, sometimes I think we need to open up our cheques, look at those stubs, and see what kind of taxes we pay. We have a responsibility to say to you, we are taking that money to do this for you, this for you, and this for you. We are not putting you into further debt so we have to come back and get more. We are not going to tax, like some of our counterparts on the other side of the House propose we should do, especially the NDP. We are not doing that. We are finding ways to streamline and be efficient.

In year three of that Sustainability Plan, Mr. Speaker, we predict we are going to be back to surplus. As I said, for a couple of years we will bite the bullet on this, but we are doing it for all of the right reasons. As I said, we are not doing it to be popular; that is for sure. We are doing it because we believe in the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, because we refuse, we absolutely refuse, to say we are simply going to allow the deficit to build and build and do nothing about it. That is absolutely not happening.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not do some talk about some health care because this is a ministry I am extremely proud to be part of, first of all. We have made some tremendous inroads and we continue to. I would have been standing in this last session of the House of Assembly and talking about the fact that in

Newfoundland and Labrador our commitment to health care is 40 per cent of the Budget.

Mr. Speaker, after this, and in this Budget, guess what I am still saying to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? We are still committing to spending 40 per cent of our Province's entire Budget on health care, \$2.9 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Mr. Speaker, that is the commitment of this government. That is the commitment of this Premier, to continue to spend in health care, to address the needs of families in all regions of the Province, and to ensure the success and quality of that health care. We know that we have made some critical investments already and we are going to continue to do those.

We talk about investments in wait times. We heard a lot of criticism about wait times and some of those were very, very justified criticisms, Mr. Speaker. We have spent billions of dollars in terms of wait times in this Province. Some of the successes of them have been unprecedented, and I want to talk about them.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we rank second in Canada in wait times for priority areas including radiation treatment, cardiac bypass surgery, cataract surgery, hip and knee replacement, and hip fracture repair. I want to say that again. We are second in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: That did not just happen. That is a result of sound investment. That is a result of good planning. That is the result of consultation, hearing first of all that there was a problem, addressing that problem by consulting with our health care providers, and finding the best way forward.

I have people contacting my office from other jurisdictions around the country on a regular basis and when I go to meetings with my

counterparts saying to me, how did you do that? How did you move from the rankings that were at the bottom of the scale to be top in Canada?

Mr. Speaker, we did it because we took the time to listen, we took the time to study, and we took the time to do it the right way. We are going to continue to do that. You will hear me talking about reviews over the next little bit of time as well, clinical and efficiency reviews, management reviews, and so on, and again, because we believe that is the best way, when we can review.

The old adage, if it is not broken, do not fix it, sometimes we need to challenge that and say maybe there are better ways to do things. Our wait time strategies have shown that to us. There were better ways to do it, and those better ways resulted in our being ranked second in the country.

Mr. Speaker, in our 2013 Budget in health care we invested \$92.3 million to strengthen Long-Term Care and Community Support Services. We continue to invest in our Prescription Drug Program, a total of \$138 million in our Prescription Drug Program, \$5.1 million of that for twelve new drug therapies, eight of which will assist patients in the treatment of various forms of cancer.

We are proud of those investments, Mr. Speaker, at a time when it was a difficult Budget for us. As I said, when we sat down to consider what we could and could not do, we still committed in terms of our Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program and our cancer care and so on. We still committed those kinds of dollars to our programs.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of different ways; one of the new things I should point out is about endoscopy wait times. I forgot to mention that when I was talking about wait times. We invested \$2 million this year to address endoscopy wait times because we were told that was a problem area, so we are going to fix that too. We are going to find a way to improve that, so we put that \$2 million in.

I do not have time, I am looking up at the clock as I am speaking; all kinds of other things, but \$225 million, Mr. Speaker, in this year's Budget for the provision of dialysis services in the Province. When we started out, we had seven dialysis centres in the Province. We now have fourteen with Harbour Breton ready to come on very soon to make our fifteenth site in terms of dialysis that we are offering here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to make reference to the Leader of the Opposition's comments on a couple of things. I will start, I think it was ambulances; I am not sure what order he did it in. I will just try to wing it from what I remember.

He did talk about ambulances and the ambulance review in this Province. I want to assure him that was a very important review for us. We spent \$250,000, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the ambulance review. We hope to have that report and it is a fair question to ask, when is the report coming? We hope to have that within the next couple of weeks, so that we can then move forward. To say that we are not doing anything with ambulance operators is just not true; it is not factual.

We have said to our ambulance operators if you have an operational issue, our doors are open, come in and talk to us.

MR. BALL: They are waiting for the review.

MS SULLIVAN: They are waiting for the review.

The Leader of the Opposition has corrected me in saying they are waiting for the review; however, in waiting for the review we have said to them, our doors are open, come in any time and many of them have. We have said if you have an operational issue come on in and discuss that with us. They have and we will continue to say that. We have sent that information out to the ambulance operators. They know that, it is not news to them. They know that, they know they can come in. We have met with many of them and we will continue to meet with them.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are hoping to have that review now within the next couple of weeks. I think it is really important, when we talk about ambulances generally speaking and where we are headed to as a Province; we need to find efficiencies there too.

We have heard again, through our consultations and before, about some particular issues around ambulances. We need to make sure that we are getting the best bang for the dollar that we can, and that we are using those ambulances as effectively as we possibly can. Therefore, we have contracted Fitch-Helleur and they are doing some tremendous work from the preliminary reports that I have heard. I am really looking forward to that final report. Ambulance operators, very clearly have been told, opportunity to come and speak to us has not been shut down as a result of the review, they can still come in. As I said they have, we have had those people come along.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Corner Brook hospital, a topic of great debate sometimes here in this House; and I hear from the Member for Bay of Islands particularly, and this time from the Leader of the Opposition that we have less acute care beds. I want the people of the Western area of the Province to understand that is a mathematical equation that does not add up for me. What we had in that hospital out there was 199 beds. At any given time we have 25 per cent, sometimes more of them, but let us just leave it at 25 per cent of them occupied by people who are waiting for long-term care placements. About fifty of those beds, so about 149 beds left.

What we are proposing to build with the \$500 million that the Member for the Bay of Islands has referred to as a cottage hospital; Mr. Speaker, that is really insulting to people in this Province and people have said that to me. A cottage hospital at more than \$500 million, it really insults people around the Province. It is not that.

What we are proposing in there will be 260 beds, 100 of which will be for long-term care patients. Mr. Speaker, when you take out that

100 and you recognize that fifty of the beds in our hospital out there now, currently, are being occupied by people waiting for long-term care beds, you can see that we will have more than enough beds. Again, that is the result of having done homework. That is the result of the due diligence that we needed to have done out there to ensure that what we are offering is the right hospital to suit the needs of the Province. We recognize clearly that we have an aging population. That is what needs to be addressed out there as well, and so we did that. We have a 260-bed, \$500 million, maybe \$600 million hospital.

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): I remind the minister her speaking time is up.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will conclude my comments in the hopes of speaking again soon.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, minister.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

It is a pleasure to stand here and speak to Budget 2013. I will say to the Minister of Health and Community Services I am confident that she will get another opportunity to speak to this Budget at some point. I am confident she will get that.

At this point it is my pleasure to stand in this House and speak to the Budget. It is something that we have had a lot of time to reflect on now since this Budget was dropped on, I believe it was March 26. We had our Easter break to go home to our districts, visit people around the Province and hear about the impacts of Budget 2013 on these people, their families and their friends.

I have heard a lot of commentary from various members. I heard one member yesterday speak, and I do not want to pick on him, but the comments that he made were very positive, full of sunshine, prosperity, and people coming home and good times all over the Province. I

am not going to single him out but what I would say is I have heard many people have stood and applauded this Budget, clapped for it, and cheered for it.

As I was sitting down scribbling down some notes it reminded me of the Dickens tale, *A Tale of Two Cities*. The quote I will use, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...” I would use this to show the contrast in this Budget when you hear one side talk about it, and when you hear what we are hearing from the people out in the Province. It is not a sunshine Budget for many people in this Province.

I know that members opposite will say that they had to make the tough choices and that they had to do what was necessary. I would say that it didn't have to be this way. We didn't need to get to this point.

I am going to have plenty of opportunity to speak to this Budget as we continue on over the coming days and weeks. What I would like to do, I am trying my best to keep my comments succinct and put together, and try to keep them on topic rather than jumping back and forth. What I would like to do is just talk about my various critic roles, just some general commentary as to the Budget, and as well as my district which was affected negatively with this Budget.

I guess the first thing that I will talk about is just as it relates to the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice is one department that got a lot of attention over this Budget process, and a lot of negative attention. We all know it was in the newspapers, it was all over the TV. We had a lot of commentary on it and a lot of attention paid to it.

We all know, members on all sides of the House know about the importance of the Department of Justice. The fact is for a lot of people it is not affecting their day-to-day lives. They do not think about it in a day-to-day fashion, but it does affect their day-to-day life, especially when they get brought into the system. Many people do

not want to be brought in. Many people get involved in the system through no fault of their own, whether it be victims of crime; they do not have any say in in this and they do not want to be there. Therefore, a high-functioning Department of Justice is crucial to this Province and to every province.

We know that the Department of Justice saw a lot of damage, and there were significant cuts to that department. I just wanted to talk about some of the different areas. Again, there has been some change in this over the past week, so I would invite members opposite – they are going to get an opportunity to correct me if I am wrong, and let me know if I err in what I say. A lot of what I am doing, too, is going on the commentary passed on to me by people, people affected very directly.

There are all kinds of different aspects to the Justice system. One of them is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We know the RNC has jurisdiction here in the capital city and in other places in the Province, but the RCMP is in many other places in this Province, especially the rural areas. There has been a cut in the budget to the RCMP and there has been a loss of positions.

We are still trying to determine the effect of where these cuts are. We know there is one in Buchans. I have been advised that there is one in Burgeo, there is a position gone. Now, it is hard to get some information because many of the people you hear from are not allowed to talk. You hear it and you try to get the information, but a lot of that information is not forthcoming yet. I am trying to get it. I am aware too; I believe there are a number of other positions gone. Am I right in saying fifteen?

AN HON. MEMBER: In Wildlife?

MR. A. PARSONS: No, RCMP, fifteen?

AN HON. MEMBER: Around twenty.

MR. A. PARSONS: About fifteen to twenty positions are gone in policing in this Province.

We have brought this up in the House, and we know members opposite will get up and talk about the investment that was made, but that is not what I am talking about what was done. I am talking about what is going on right now, right here, as a result of this Budget.

When we talk about a reduced RCMP influence, that, to me, is a negative. Now, we know the RCMP is federal but we have that federal-provincial contract. The feds kick in so much and the Province kicks in so much.

Now, another part to this system is obviously the Crown Attorneys. The Crown Attorneys are a very important part. I know the current Minister of Finance has dealt with them over his long, very esteemed career on the other side. He did not agree with them a lot of the time but he knew what they did and he appreciated what they did. What I would say is that I am hearing a lot from Crown Attorneys. I am going to reference all this back to the committee that got together, met, and had a three-hour meeting and came up with a decision after. I am going to talk about that but I want to talk about what happened first.

I have letters here from Crown Attorneys. I have heard e-mails and I have gotten phone calls from Crown Attorneys, and they are very upset. The fact is they had to write anonymous letters to the paper and they have had to make anonymous commentaries. The fact is many of them are scared. They are actually worried about their jobs if they speak out as a public servant.

They have come to us in confidence. They have to sign their letter to *The Telegram* in confidence. They are worried, though, because their ability to do their job may be compromised. That is what they are worried about. They do not want to put that out there. There is no whistle-blower legislation in place to protect them. They have dealt with all the other aspects of this system but they do not feel – they know they had representation at the committee, but a lot of these people are still concerned about the effect that this is going to have on a go-forward basis.

AN HON. MEMBER: There are jobs elsewhere.

MR. A. PARSONS: That is what many of them are worried about, is that they will have to get jobs elsewhere and they will have to leave the Province. They do not want to speak out because if they do, they are afraid of getting that bad reference if they do speak out.

I will continue on to the Legal Aid Commission. Legal aid took a hit in this Budget as well. We did see one legal aid solicitor who got in trouble for speaking out. He put forward his commentary, he had something to say and he was disciplined for it. That is very unfortunate that a person who has had a contribution to this system wants to say something and he gets suspended for that. To that, Mr. Speaker, I say that is unfortunate.

We have had other legal aid losses and we are still trying to see how it is all going to fare out in the different areas. I know there are fewer places to go. I think it was in the last session there were a number of circuit courts that were eliminated in this Province in the rural areas. I know there was one in mine. I believe there might have been one in Springdale. I think there was one in Harbour Breton.

They have fewer places to go now, but these legal aid solicitors have a hard job as well. They have a lot of travel to do. They represent a number of people. It is a very difficult job and now there is less resources to do that. I know they also had representation in the committee but here they are, one of them spoke out, and that person suffered the consequences of speaking out publicly.

I will move on to another area, and that is one that has gotten a lot of attention as well, especially in the last couple of weeks. That would be the sheriff's officers, the deputy sheriffs. They had a significant cut to their manpower, to their person power – I do not want to be politically incorrect. They had a significant cut and they also had representation at the committee.

A lot of these people are pretty upset, very upset, because number one, the sheriff's job is not often truly recognized by the people out there. They know what lawyers do, they know what police do, but they do not truly know what sheriffs do. They have had a tough time. They feel they have not received their due respect. To that, I appreciate where they are coming from. A lot of people do not know what it is they do.

We see it everyday on the news when we watch the court on TV. We see the people coming back and forth and we see them doing their job. When there are issues at, say Atlantic Place, they are the people there who have to take responsibility, especially when it comes to escorting prisoners. The people picked up off the street, they are there.

A lot of the glory goes to the RCMP for doing their job, as it should be, but these sheriffs also have input into the system and they have an impact. They have to carry these people to and from, and it can be a dangerous job. I know we have all seen certain individuals who have been in the system who are tough people. Some of them, we have had sheriffs and guards assaulted. What they do is not an easy job.

One of the things they had trouble with is that the cuts were made, everything went a bit haywire, and then we had the meeting that was convened. The meeting happened, I believe, on a Wednesday night. Then I believe on Thursday the announcement was made that we are going to put some of these resources back into the system. A lot of these people never received a call from the HR department until after the weekend. We are not talking a huge, huge workforce. It might have been twenty people affected. The fact is they were not taken care of, they were not told: Am I affected? Am I not affected?

You talk to some of these young people who have been away. They moved home. They wanted to come home and start up. They had these jobs, many of them, for not long period of times.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

These sheriffs, again, here they are and they did not truly understand the impact of these cuts on them. They did not truly understand, and they were not told. It is one thing to lose your position and be cut, and even though you can get through that, it is very tough, but sometimes the uncertainty is the worst part. When you have that uncertainty: How is this going to affect me? Am I affected? Will I be one of the ones called back? Am I not going to be? Am I going to be on this list where I get called in? That has a grave effect on them, especially when they are trying to figure out: What am I going to do when it comes to the bills and everything else?

Now, we move on then to another cog in the Justice Department, the Justice system, and that is the probation section. I have made a call. I am trying to still figure out how this is going to work. I have made a call through the Minister of Justice's executive assistant. I wanted to speak to the person in charge of probation, but I am not allowed to speak to them without going through the EA.

I will recognize the minister's EA did get in contact with me and it looks like I am going to sit down with Ms Cumby next week and have a conversation about how this is going to affect places like Port aux Basques where we lost our probation officer. We lost this probation officer, a person who was two years from retirement and had been there for years and years. She lost her position. That is very unfortunate. I talked to her the day after the Budget and she was crying.

I fully expect that members on the other side received those calls with tears on the other end of the phone call. I am not saying you did not get them and I am not saying you have not gone through a tough time. I am only trying to relate my experience and the people I heard from, people I dealt with and know personally. They received that call.

It is one thing this person lost their job. Then the next part, through no fault of government per se, many of these people are part of union, and they had a choice to bump someone and they had to bump someone. The first thing is the job is actually in Port Saunders, so you have to uproot two years from retirement and move from your community. Again, they do not live in Port aux Basques, they live just outside, and uproot to Port Saunders, which is not just a very quick move. Move to Port Saunders and bump somebody else.

When you hear the personal circumstances, and I do not want to get into them because they are delicate, but when you work with someone and you know their family and some of the stuff they have gone through, and then you have to make the choice whether you are going to be unemployed with two years left and basically have to move out of the Province, take a job that is not in this field, or bump someone that you have worked with and dealt with, it is tough. They go through a lot of emotional turmoil, and that in turn comes back. When you have these phone calls time after time it affects you and I know it affects the members on the other side. It must; it has to.

The probation offices in many places have been cancelled. I know the ankle bracelet program has been cancelled. So without passing judgement on it, I do not think it is a good move. I do not see it as a good move, but I will have the conversation with Ms Cumby who heads up Probation, have that conversation, and see what the practical effects on the system will be. If the probation office in Port aux Basques is gone and they have to travel to Stephenville, will they be more likely now to impose a different sentence on these people? I do not know. That is going to be up to the judges, but they have to recognize the fact that the same level of probation services is not there.

We also move on to another area that has gotten some attention. It has had questions in this House and that is conservation officers. I had a couple of very trying phone calls with individuals. Again, we all know there was an increase in the size of the civil service during the

2000s. We all know that, but some of these jobs that are being cut have been there twenty years. They were not part of that explosion. They were there for years.

I look to somebody I know in the Southwest Coast who lost their job. Now in that area they have lost an RCMP officer, they lost DFO last year, they lost their circuit court, and now they have lost their conservation officers. We actually have no presence on the Southwest Coast. We talk about the La Poile caribou herd. You talk to these people now and in many cases they have to operate on their own and in unfamiliar areas. To do this job it is not pleasant sometimes, especially when you have to go out at night on patrol in unfamiliar scenarios and places that you are not aware and doing it by yourself.

I am very concerned about that because obviously when you reduce the conservation presence to twenty-two officers in the entire Province, in a Province of this land mass and this geography, that is very difficult. I do not think that the conservation presence will be there. Again, we have heard the term now poacher's paradise being tossed out there. I hope that is not the case, but when you reduce the presence so significantly then that has an impact.

We know that all these cuts were made in the Budget and this is one of the concerns. We have heard this term brought up recently: compelling argument. In this case, because of the drastic cuts made to the Justice department, there was a lot of uproar and it ended up that there was a committee formed, and on that committee you had the Attorney General, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice, and other members of the public service; you had the head of Legal Aid.

The troubling part is that this is a government that knew this was coming and has been planning for this. They have been having long meetings and core mandates. Again, if I am wrong I stand to be corrected. There was a three hour meeting on a Wednesday night and the changes were announced on Thursday.

I applaud, Mr. Speaker, the willingness of government to listen to this. We asked for it. We wanted it. We got it. I would be remiss if I did not say that if you can change it so quickly I have to question whether these were looked at in the first place. Were they listened to in the first place? Was there meaningful consultation in the first place?

It did not have to be this way. We did not have to do it this way. That is why we end up in a situation where we say one thing one week and talk about, I am confident things are going to be great and the same, but in the end they are not and we have to change things. That moves on to this compelling argument. That is something that is going to come up again, Mr. Speaker, as I continue in my other opportunities to speak to this.

There are other concerns that I have; positions that are not filled and positions that are not open. I understand that the superintendent at Her Majesty's Penitentiary, that position is now vacant. To me, that seems like a pretty important position. We all know about HMP and we have talked ad nauseam about the state of HMP, but the fact is when the people at HMP, if the positions are not filled, is the service still the same? Do we still have the same level of safety for the people working there and the people incarcerated there?

We hear about some of the issues, too, about how we could have done things differently to perhaps achieve some savings that could have prevented. Even if it prevented one less person from losing their job, then we have to bring it up.

One example, if we go back to conservation, that is something that is gone. You involve Natural Resources, Environment, and Justice. I know there was one section of workers who were sent to St. John's, sent on a course to do I think it was chemical mobilization when it comes to, say, polar bears and other wildlife. They were sent in, taught the course, and given the training, all at government cost. Then a couple of weeks later, there was a decision made that we are going to actually put somebody else in charge of

that and let somebody else do that. We just wasted a lot of money by sending you in to do that training. It did not have to be that way.

There are more examples of that. We have been told other examples of waste where just two weeks I believe before the Budget came down there were cuts. There was a whole new load of uniforms ordered for people in the Justice department, many people who were let go. They are small examples, but they all add up. They all add up.

Mr. Speaker, my time is getting short right now. What I would like to do at this point is I want to move, seconded by the Member for Bay of Islands, that the amendment that was previously presented, the non-confidence motion, be amended by changing the period at the end of thereof to a comma, and by adding immediately thereafter the following words: and that this House also condemns the government for its failure to present a Budget that reflects the possibilities which exist in terms of addressing the needs of the people of this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The House will take a short recess to review the amendment.

This House stands in recess.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has reviewed the amendment and finds the sub-amendment to be in order.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to rise again and speak again to this Budget and to the sub-amendment, which we just entered successfully. What I would say is I am going to move off the Justice department now because the Justice

department has gotten a lot of attention. There are a number of other departments and issues I need to address in this Budget. There is just so much. There is something for everyone, really; or not enough for everybody. There is a cut for everybody, no matter who you are.

I know the Minister of Health spoke and I am going to speak to Health at some point, but I did not want to get there yet. I know Health is going to take their lumps over the next year as they hit their core mandate review, as we saw in this Sustainability Plan, which I would note just coincidentally leads to a surplus in 2015, which is just such an amazing coincidence, actually.

What I would like to do is move on to another department, and that is the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. That is another department that has gotten a lot of scrutiny, and rightfully so. I have a number of things marked here.

The thing about Advanced Education and Skills, which I like to call AES, is that there are a lot of acronyms as it relates to AES. There is CNA, CNAQ, ABE, EAS, and JCP. There are a couple of other acronyms I would use to describe the department, but they are not appropriate so I am just going to have to refrain because I would not want to get myself in trouble here. There are some nice acronyms. The members know what they are. I know they recognize what I am trying to get across there, but I will leave it at that.

What I would say is there is a difference between this year and last year when we did the Budget process. Last year when we did the Budget, the department had only been around, say, six months. It had been put together. We are still willing to give it the benefit of the doubt. We had our concerns and we had our complaints, but we said we were willing to give it a chance. We know that Mr. Noseworthy came in and gave us the \$150,000 report, which he was kind enough to deliver in December 2012. That is where it gets a bit shady. I am just going to put some points across here.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: Again, I understand the Member for Mount Pearl North has some questions. By all means, stand up and –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: Well, again, you are going to get an opportunity, and when you do you can address what I have to say, by all means, I look forward to it.

MR. KENT: I am not talking to you (inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: He can say he is not talking to me, but I would say you are going against your mandate of public engagement, and that seems unfortunate that we are not going to do that –

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member to make his comments to the Chair.

MR. A. PARSONS: I will go back to the Noseworthy report. Again, it is a very, very thick report, very hefty, and it was dropped on our table. I cannot remember if it was Budget day or the day after Budget day. It was funny it just came out then. Now, we had been asking for it since we had known it was released some time before.

It is funny how it came about, too, because we put a freedom of information, an ATIPP request; I think it was February 7 that I put mine in. I think there was a member of the media who put his request in on February 13. So we all know that in thirty days you get your request, sometimes you get it back and sometimes they say that we need more time, or we cannot give it to you for whatever reason.

Now, in this case we actually both received a letter on April 10. We both received it. I got mine; he got his. They were both dated March 27; I guess that must have been the day that it was released. It said there is no need to comply with this, because we have given you the report – which, again, by the time we got it was two weeks after it was released, which was a month-and-a-half after we put the request in.

So again, it is just funny, information is a great thing. I know the minister has acknowledged the shortcomings in the system – I believe he acknowledged that in the media – and he is going to fix them; I give him credit. I always say that the Minister for IBRD, and I guess the minister responsible for ATIPP, I think he is the best minister over there. I think he is the best over there, yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: I will tell you why I think he is the best over there, Mr. Speaker, because anybody who can stand up and speak with a straight face about Bill 29, that takes skill. So I appreciate when he does that.

Anyway, I am going to go back to the department. Again, this has got a lot of attention since March 26. There are a lot of reasons it has got attention. Now, one of them was that they made one cut before the Budget was dropped. That was EAS, or Employment Assistance Services. They dropped that on a Friday afternoon. Again, it took people a little while to figure out what it was because it came out in such sunshiny, rainbow language: We are going to improve things. A bunch of people found out on a Friday afternoon that they lost their job. Many people who had no prior notice.

That is just unfortunate that they chose to do it that way, and again, done without consultation, any acknowledgement of what it is that they do. Now, what I would say is this is an issue that has gotten some attention. There have been protests, there have been questions in the House, and there have been petitions. I know, for a fact, of several members on the other side who have heard these; and I know, for a fact, that several members have met with people from EAS and they have expressed their concern. Now they have expressed their concern because all of us were affected – it is not like it was just Opposition members affected; it was members all over this House who lost offices and jobs and services in their districts.

I know that the people who lost their jobs have actually had meetings with ministers in the last

week and they have had meetings with caucus members. A lot of times those caucus members actually said: I do not agree with this. Now, that is what they are telling me.

All I can assume is that went back to the Cabinet table and for the caucus room to say, look, these are the issues are hearing. Again, I just put that out there. I know they had those concerns, and that is good because they realize that this was done not exactly the right way.

The other thing, too, is that apparently this was brought out on the first. Now again, this was done without referring to Mr. Noseworthy's report, which apparently did not form part of the Budget deliberations. I know it was looked at when the Budget was brought in. It is funny how it all came about. There is still a bit off there. I am sure that I am going to be educated on how it all went down at some point. I am sure that over the next days and weeks somebody will inform me of how we ended up in this situation.

EAS – we talk about this job shortage, this labour shortage, and we talk about how AES is going to handle it. It is funny because one of the things John Noseworthy says in his report is how AES workers are overworked – overworked. They have too much to do; however, the level of service will not be compromised by taking the workload of 226 people and adding it on them; it is not going to be compromised in any way, shape or form.

If you actually talked to the EAS workers – that is if you talk to them, we do – they will tell you about the AES workers that they work in conjunction with, they work very closely with, they are friends with, and these AES workers are crying because, number one, they have not been told what it is that they are going to do in the future. They do not have a plan. That is the best kind of decision, when you make it and then after you make the decision, you figure out what you are going to do. That is what seems to have occurred here.

I am putting that out there. This is what I am hearing from the people on the ground, these

people who come to me and they are making compelling arguments. They are making very compelling arguments; I hope that they get an opportunity to make compelling arguments to the members on the other side. We will see if that happens. I think it will. I know that the members, ministers, and backbenchers will listen to these people and hopefully bring these concerns forward because it does not have to be this way; we can make change.

These people are actually willing to work with government to find these efficiencies that need to be found; they have no issue with it. They knew this was coming. Last year we had the trouble where it was almost to the D-Day where the pink slip had to be issued and they got the six month reprieve.

I will move on because EAS is just one thing. I have so much to cram into eleven minutes here. There is a lot here.

The next thing I am going to move into is ABE. That is something again; petitions, protests and I am failing to understand why this happened. One concern is that barring that fact that there could be changes, and keep in mind we know change can happen because you did it with the justice system. You listened, you heard from the people; it should have been done beforehand, but hey.

AN HON. MEMBER: What a minister.

MR. A. PARSONS: What a minister. He sat down with them.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is he the best?

MR. A. PARSONS: He is not the best, no. I only say that because he does not have to deal with Bill 29.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Member for Grand Bank.

MR. A. PARSONS: The Member for Grand Bank is not the best minister.

What I do want to come to is ABE. The problem is there are a lot of issues out there where people do not know what is going to happen, they do not know how this is going to pan out. They do not know where it is going to go.

It is the middle of April –

MS SULLIVAN: I know what (inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: The Minister of Health tells me she knows what is going to happen with ABE. Well I look forward to that. The next time I have a question in the House, I will ask you first. I hope I can get the answer from the Minister of Health on ABE. I hope the answer is not very, very soon because I got that answer to a couple of other questions that I asked.

I digress; it is too easy to get caught off track here when we talk about this stuff. Sometimes it is hard not to just laugh at this, because it really is laughable in many ways. It is a serious matter because there are a lot of people losing their jobs. These are people with the College of the North Atlantic, which has been recognized by members on both sides and all over this Province as a great institution. It is a great institution, but many of these people feel slighted because in a lot of ways they have been condemned and demeaned over the public airwaves since this cut came down. That is unfortunate that these public employees were put down by members on the other side. Now not all of the members, but some, and they know who they are.

We come back to the fact that I asked five questions in the House today on ABE; on the cost. I had to ask the Premier first because she had some numbers out on the radio and they were a bit different than the minister's, and they are a bit different than what we are hearing from other people

That is the thing; we have these people who are in the system coming to us. They will not go public. God forbid they go public; they will be on the chopping block next. That is the fear that is out there, that is a realistic fear. We have seen

it happen, it has happened. Why wouldn't they be afraid that they will lose their job by speaking out? These people want to contribute. They want to contribute and give their reasoned, educated – people with high education, people teaching students, but they are not heard from so they come to us.

One of the things at the end of the day is that there must have been some kind of paper or documentation putting all this together; working papers. We would like to see the working papers. We would like to see this information. I would like to see it. I asked for it, I do not know, five times today and still do not have it, which is unfortunate.

It sort of differs from what John Noseworthy said. That is something you are going to find over the next couple of weeks, that there is a big difference in what John Noseworthy said and what the people on the other side are saying. There is a big difference, which is unfortunate. We paid John \$150,000 to get his report that he spent nine, ten months doing and got sent back, had to do a bit more. I find that confusing and strange. That is like many people in this Province, they find these cuts confusing and strange.

I will move off this and I will go on to what else? I have a lot here when it comes to Advanced Education because it really was a hodgepodge that was tossed together. We could get into the Income Support issue. We know that they are understaffed, positions left unfilled. God forbid you try to get somebody on the phone because it is not going to happen, you are going to wait. You are going to wait, you are not going to get an answer and it is going to take you some time.

Many of these people are very vulnerable. In fact, in some cases some of these people are going through this system where they are having trouble with EAS because that is not there. Then they are having trouble with the Adult Basic Education, they are not sure what they are going to do there because that is going to be delayed until the next part. What they are told is to go on Income Support. They are being told to

go on Income Support. When they call Income Support they cannot get anyone on the phone.

There is a breakdown in the system. Minister, if you want, you can stand up and correct me, but I tell you what, I am hearing it from the people out there. What I would say is I would be very happy to direct the people who call me with these issues, I would be happy to direct them across. I would be happy to; you can have these calls.

They have tried to have the meetings with the minister, but I did not see you there at the protest. I will give the Member for Port au Port credit, he shows up at protests, he shows up at meetings. He does not get as great a reception as some of them as we saw in the last little while, but do you know what? He had the guts to show up and I appreciate that. The people appreciate it.

AN HON. MEMBER: I was there too.

MR. A. PARSONS: The Member for Humber West was there too, and the minister. That is something different. That is fracking, which somebody will get into at some point. That was a meeting where, do you know what? The government listened.

Now, maybe I should watch out what I say. We have asked for stuff. I do not know if it is going to happen, but they came out, they heard the people. Credit where credit is due, they showed up. We showed up and members of the NDP showed up and listened to the people.

Consultation is not happening everywhere else, I guarantee you that. We are not getting the opportunity to make a compelling argument in other cases. Just to go back to EAS, actually, they invited the minister to come and have a say at one meeting. Nada, nothing, zip, zilch; nobody showed up. How can they make their argument when the door is closed and nobody is listening?

In some cases we have heard, well, what do we do with all of these people from the College of the North Atlantic who are now going to be out

of jobs once they get through the bumping process? One of the comments made by a member on the other side was there are plenty of private sector jobs out there for them to get, tonnes of them. If that is the attitude we are bringing into this process, we are in a bad place. If that is the respect we have for these people, to say we are going to get rid of them in one spot and they are going to go fit their skills into another spot, it is not exactly going to be just pieces in a puzzle working together perfectly. We need to appreciate this.

I want to go back to a couple of other things. Oh, one thing, actually, that Mr. Noseworthy talked about in his report when he talked about this department that was probably there –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I am sure the members seem engrossed in what I have to say, going by the conversation going on around me here. I am going to continue on. Nobody is going to stop me from putting in what I have to say, I guarantee you that.

One of the things Mr. Noseworthy talked about and got paid to talk about was the Workforce Secretariat, I believe it was. I think that is what it is called. I might have the name wrong. That is something that was supposed to happen but did not happen. It was supposed to, but did not. That is something we see a lot when it comes to this department.

I have to say I am just discouraged because when you look at this very comprehensive report – now, I will give him credit. He got paid, he did the report, and it was thorough. The question is, is it going to be followed? Are we actually going to use the report we paid the money for?

He is recognizing that in a lot of the things that are put together there is no oversight. There is

actually no idea if the money we are putting in is getting the results that are supposed to come out. That is something I could apply all over the place here. We hear about, we invested this much money. The fact is we cannot invest that much money anymore. So if we are getting this level of result, outcome, and service for this amount of money and you cut that money, wouldn't the logical conclusion be that the level of service, the results, are going to go down as well?

Health care is a primary example of that because, again, we talk about the investment, but we have issues there. I am going to save that; I will get to that. I know the minister is over there waiting to hear what I have to say, but I am going to fill her in at another point because I am going to stick on AES because there are enough issues in that department, which does have a very high price tag, I would put out there.

Now, I am just going to move on here, just a variation of numbers – and I have a lot of e-mails here that I have been receiving from a number of different people. It is not just in this country or in this Province; we have issues over in Qatar as well. Now, I am still waiting to find out – we did have the good news announcement. It is something I talked about, everybody knows I talked about it, and that was the situation over in Qatar. I have put out there from day one; it is a good project – it is a good project. Again, that was a project that was started by, I believe, the Liberal government, but this government saw the value and invested in it and then continued on with it.

Now, we had some concerns last year and this year because we were getting close to the point where the comprehensive agreement was over, but we know that there is apparently a three-year agreement signed. Now, I am surprised that it was not ten years. I am sure there are reasons behind this, but I cannot get access to them. I cannot get access to find out what it is we signed. A lot of people are wondering what is going to happen there too.

Now, there is another issue – actually, I have written to the minister on it and I have written to

the President of the College of the North Atlantic. I am waiting for a response on that because there are more concerns over there. Now, I have not brought it out in the House of Assembly here yet, because I figure you try to work with government to get the results that we need to benefit the people of this Province.

Just because they are working over there in Qatar does not mean they should not be treated the same, because they are contributing. They are over there, they still have property here, they still pay tax here, and they still come home here and spend their dollars. The fact is that a lot of these people are very concerned about what is going on here as well.

We can move on here. Actually, I have here – I have twenty seconds – this is just a transcript of the radio show where we had to guess a number at the cost of ABE, because there were so many different numbers going around there. Do I pick John's? Do I pick the minister's? Do I pick the Premier's? So I am looking for the working papers on that, and, hopefully, we will get them at some point. I figure if I ask five questions today and did not get it, I will try ten questions on Monday, and maybe persistence is key.

Again, this is the end of my time; I appreciate the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted to stand in my place and talk to this amendment to the motion. I can tell you I will not be supporting the amendment or the motion, so you can mark that down for sure.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of misinformation out there and there are a lot of agendas at work around the ABE program. So I would like to focus on that for a minute before I talk about the good work this government does with regard to AES and certainly with regard to our

commitments to the people of the Province in this Budget 2013.

There is a lot of confusion and there is a lot of stress for people. There is people spreading misinformation. It is unfortunate and it is irresponsible. So, I would like to clear the air, Mr. Speaker, on a few of these issues.

We have decided, as a government, to develop new approaches to the education of upgrading and employment supports that will help people get jobs in today's market. Our goals here, we are committed to accessibility and we are committed to affordability and efficiency so that our students have the tools they require to be the leaders of tomorrow. This is what this change is all about. Mr. Speaker, these are not cuts. These are changes to the way we deliver ABE to the people of this Province.

We have a commitment. We have a commitment to the people. We have a commitment to the students. We have a commitment to achieve better results for the adult learners in their efforts to gain the necessary education, but we also have a commitment to the people of the Province to make sure that we do this efficiently, cost wise and effectively for the students involved.

We understand the need for Adult Basic Education with today's job market and we understand what is going on in the market today, and the opportunities available due to the large resource projects that are happening in our Province today, the attrition that is happening as people retire, the aging demographic, and we are expecting about 70,000 job openings in the next ten years, which is a number again that seems to be fudged around a bit, Mr. Speaker. The reality is most of those jobs are going to come through attrition. We do have that aging demographic, so we know that we need to fill these jobs going forward.

ABE is the first step to getting people attached to the workforce. People who do not have their high school equivalency, they need to make that first step. So we are committed again, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that people get that first

step. We have ways to do that and we have a plan to do that.

I just want to get to some of the facts, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite spoke about some of the numbers, and I would like to reaffirm a few of the numbers here as well. Currently the cost for Newfoundland and Labrador to deliver ABE is \$6,550 a year per student. That is compared to \$1,200 a year for a student in New Brunswick, \$2,100 in PEI, and \$2,375 for Nova Scotia. We benchmarked our cost versus the Maritime Provinces. We need to understand what are we doing, how are we doing it, and how can we do it better, more effectively and more efficiently.

There are currently about 2,000 students in Newfoundland and Labrador who are attending ABE programs, Mr. Speaker. About 40 per cent attend the College of the North Atlantic and 60 per cent, Mr. Speaker, which is important to note, attend private institutions or community organizations that deliver ABE programs.

What we are saying here is that 60 per cent of students in Newfoundland and Labrador who are doing ABE presently are doing it in private institutions. Again, we are not doing something that is different, Mr. Speaker. We are changing what we were doing. The 40 per cent of the students who are going to the College of the North Atlantic will be transitioned into the private sector, whether it is through private institutions or third-party providers.

The new model, again, is going to change things for the students at the College of the North Atlantic, as we are aware. Just to look at the cost at the College of the North Atlantic, Mr. Speaker, our analysis shows that it costs about \$9,400 per student per year to engage in ABE at the College of the North Atlantic.

Again, when you bring in these numbers, we realize when we looked at this, when we did our core mandate review within the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, we knew we had to make changes. Whether or not we went through a budgetary process like we have in the last year, we would have made these changes

because it just was red flagged immediately. We knew that we were not delivering these services properly, so this is about efficiency and effectiveness.

Mr. Speaker, some of the things that we are hearing out there – reports of students not being able to finish their education – is absolutely inaccurate. That is false. We are going to make sure that these students are taken care of. We are going to be dealing with these students individually. Anybody who wants to do ABE in Newfoundland and Labrador today or is doing it right now, we will make sure that they will be doing it again in September. Mr. Speaker, that is happening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: We will make sure the transition plans are clear, that they are being developed in a proper way. We think the new model will be more flexible. In fact, we think it is going to be delivered to more communities in Newfoundland and Labrador than ever before, Mr. Speaker. Not saying that the delivery of service was not well done at the College of the North Atlantic, but we want to do it better, Mr. Speaker, and we want to get it to more communities, and we think we can achieve that goal.

Mr. Speaker, just to clarify a few things here again, to make sure we understand what is happening here. Students can currently pay for an ABE program in a number of ways. For example, if the student is receiving Income Support, there is funding available. If they are EI eligible, they can apply for funding under the Labour Market Development Agreement or they can pay out-of-pocket, Mr. Speaker.

We would like to ensure that current students who have the eligibility requirements for funding for the ABE program will not change as a result of the new delivery model.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, it is really important to understand the parameters around the curriculum, Mr. Speaker. The curriculum will not change as we move forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I want to recognize the hon. the Member for St. John's West.

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Students doing ABE currently will receive the same curriculum and the same standards they received at the College of the North Atlantic as they are transitioned into third-party providers. Instructors of ABE in private training institutions and not-for-profit groups are approved by the Department of Advanced Education and Skills and have to meet minimum qualifications, such as a university degree in education, with the minimum university credits in the subjects they teach. Again, Mr. Speaker, the quality is there, the quality needs to continue to be there, and we will ensure the quality is going to be there come September as we execute this transition.

One important thing to understand about the new model for Adult Basic Education delivery is we will make sure there will be more accountability and results orientated to ensure adult learners get the education and skills they need to achieve self-sufficiency and independence. Mr. Speaker, we have heard some numbers around the graduation rates and success rates between the private institutions and the College of the North Atlantic. There is a gap between these numbers. There is a huge gap between these numbers. Through the RFP process, we will ensure that there are going to be requirements on the part of third-party providers to ensure that graduation rates are brought into the RFP process and that students will be required to graduate at a better and quicker rate than they have in the past. That is making it more cost-efficient for the people of the Province, making it more effective for the

people who are graduating, and getting them into the workforce much quicker.

We will ensure that ABE students going forward will get their equivalency quicker and make sure they attach themselves to the workforce. We need these people put to work in Newfoundland and Labrador today, tomorrow, and the years after. We want that to happen quickly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these are a few comments around ABE that I would like to get into. We certainly understand that change is never easy. We certainly sympathise with the students out there who are going through this transition period. We just want to reassure them that we have a plan, that we have their interests in mind, and that we are going to make sure that indeed they get the quality education they deserve and need.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move on a little bit to the Budget. We have heard some commentary today around Budget 2013. I would just like to quote the chair of the Board of Trade. Here is some validation about what this Budget is, what it is all about, and how this is going to impact the people of this Province. Here is a quote, "We had hoped the province would use the budget to get back to basics and were pleased to see in this budget a plan for a sustainable future and the government's commitment to surplus by 2015... Turning the tide from spending to restraint is difficult for any government. We're pleased to see this process has started with this budget."

He continues to go on, Mr. Speaker, and it is just a quick quote again, "The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to balanced budgets within two fiscal years. We need to continue on this path, paying down debt, focusing on core services and sustainable spending so we can take advantage of today's opportunities and prepare for tomorrow". These are quotes, Mr. Speaker, from the chair of the St. John's Board of Trade. I think that is good validation about the work that we are doing in this Budget.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few things that the people at home need to know about this Budget. I think they are very, very important. We are talking about responsible management. We are talking about responsible decisions. The 10-Year Sustainability Plan is a core piece to this Budget, Mr. Speaker, and a continued commitment to strong fiscal management.

We are looking at that surplus, Mr. Speaker. We are looking at vital programs and services being protected. There are more people working today than any other time in our Province's history. This is about responsible decisions and responsible management.

Mr. Speaker, while we are doing that, and we know we had to make some tough decisions, we are also investing. We are investing in families: \$185 million for program delivery in central areas for child protection, youth services and child care, which is significant; \$160 million annually on home care; and new funding of \$15.3 million for home support. This is new funding, Mr. Speaker, \$15.3 million for home support.

We are talking about \$9.5 million to allow for twenty-two new drug therapies under Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program and the Cancer Care and Hematology Program, Mr. Speaker. This is new investment by our government.

As the Minister of Health said earlier, leading the country in health care wait times for priority areas such as cardiac bypass and hip fracture repairs is another investment that we think is important, Mr. Speaker. We have done that and we are going to continue to do that going forward. We invested in a tax regime that results in more income for families.

Mr. Speaker, investing in education is a very important piece to what we are doing in this Budget: \$1.3 billion to meet educational needs of children and youth – \$1.3 billion. This is a serious investment in our future and in our children. We have the best pupil-teacher ratio in any Province of Canada. Forty-two million dollars will help meet the demand for skilled

labour. If I have time I am going to get into that a little further. Again, we have the lowest tuition in the country.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing in towns and communities: \$230 million to help build aging municipal facilities, deliver new regional projects, and continue the fight against poverty through the Poverty Reduction Strategy. We have committed to a new Municipal Operating Grant formula, resulting in an increase in funding for smaller towns. We have a new Capital Works Program for the larger municipalities and this has been welcomed very warmly, with a commitment to change the relationship going forward.

Mr. Speaker, we are also investing in the future, a plan to keep our economy vibrant. So we are talking about making sure this economy is working at the very top pitch it can. We will provide the oil and grease to make sure that happens. We committed in this Budget over \$200 million in strategic investments; over \$866 million in infrastructure investments to help drive economic opportunity and activity, and generate 5,300 person-years of employment.

Mr. Speaker, part of that \$866 million is a commitment to build a new west end high school in my District of St. John's West. The land is being cleared. I talk to people in my district almost every day and they see it happening before their eyes. It is long awaited for the people of the district and they are pleased that they are going to put this new 900-pupil school in the west end of St. John's, something that we have waited for a while and we know that we are going on the path. The contract is out there now for the actual construction of it. Right now the land is being cleared and prepared for the construction season.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about the department that I am a Parliamentary Secretary in and that is Advanced Education and Skills. I would like to start off with this: the job outlook for Newfoundland and Labrador is very strong. Our economy has created high-skill, high-tech jobs and cutting-edge technology that are in demand around the world. With

developments like Muskrat Falls, Hebron, and other developments to come, we are building a dynamic modern economy and realizing that Newfoundland and Labrador is one of the best places in the world to raise a family, receive training, and build a career.

Mr. Speaker, our investments are paying significant dividends, giving the Province the highest productivity growth rates anywhere in the country. Through strategic partnerships from business and labour and innovations in programs and services, this government has taken a creative and visionary approach to meeting the growing labour demand.

With that growing labour demand in mind, the provincial government is allocating \$47 million this year, Mr. Speaker, and this year alone, to ensure our Province has a robust labour market needed to sustain a secure future for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This new funding will support initiatives to advance apprenticeship opportunities in skilled trades, secure more skilled workers for employers, encourage immigration and ensure under-represented groups such as women, persons with disabilities, and Aboriginal persons have the skills and opportunities to obtain long-term employment. Mr. Speaker, our future job prospects in this Province have never looked brighter.

Mr. Speaker, a few little facts I would like to throw out there as well, in the few minutes I have remaining. Our current analysis indicates that the Hebron project estimate a return of approximately \$23 billion to the provincial government and expected to provide 3,500 jobs at peak, and they will be peaking sometime later on this summer. Employment generated from the building of Muskrat Falls and the transmission links will generate thirty-one direct jobs at peak employment and 1,500 direct jobs per year across more than seventy occupations, Mr. Speaker.

Through Budget 2013 we will meet future demand for labour by making sound, responsible decisions on labour market development, decisions that will help provide employment for

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and secure prosperity for future generations. As we all know, the provincial construction industry has recorded significant growth over the past five years. In fact, in 2012, construction investment rose to \$8.1 billion and actually a 42.4 per cent increase from 2011. Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador resource-based industries are providing significant and historic economic benefits and valuable employment to the people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk for a few minutes – I have about three minutes left – about affordable, accessible education, something very close to my heart. I have two daughters in university right now, Mr. Speaker. I have a son who is in high school, graduating next year. We are actually going to an apprenticeship conference, trade show tomorrow in Mount Pearl, where they are going to have an exposition showcasing the trades available and the training available in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, as we look to provide employment and labour market opportunities for our residents, we also understand there is a second side to the equation. We want to give our young people and post-secondary students every opportunity to succeed. At a time when unemployment opportunities are tied to training and skills like never before, post-secondary education is a proven path to prosperity. That prosperous future will not happen unless we secure a solid plan for the next generation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

This year, Newfoundland and Labrador will once again lead the country to make post-secondary education more affordable and more accessible. Through partnerships with post-secondary institutions, innovations and programs and services, Budget 2013 provides over \$466 million in new and continuing funding to enhance skills, training, and opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The purpose of our investments is pure and simple; to give people access to the best possible education so that the students of the day have the tools they need to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Budget 2013 provides \$25.8 million to reduce student debt through an additional investment of \$3.8 million to Memorial University to continue the freeze on tuition for the 2013-2014 academic year. The tuition freeze also remains in effect at the College of the North Atlantic.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to talk quickly on the apprenticeship programs. To help these industries prepare for the upcoming demand, Budget 2013 is providing \$5.15 million to support apprenticeship and trades. That funding includes \$800,000 to continue the Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy Program, Mr. Speaker, a very, very successful program which has huge uptake in the Province. This will help provide valuable work experience to apprentices with a focus on first and second-year apprentices, including those from under-represented groups, such as women and persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing this year \$2 million to continue the Journey person Mentorship Program, the first training of its type in Canada, a very innovative training program. I just spent a few weeks on the road informing the people of this Province exactly of the value of this program. Again, the response and uptake to this program has been incredible.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things we are doing in the Department of Advanced Education and Skills to get our people ready for the workforce, to get ready for the jobs and the opportunities that are going to happen tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, there is a bright future for our people and everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): The hon. the Government House Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Member for Port au Port, that the House now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Monday being a civic holiday, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

MR. KING: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: The Government House Leader, I think, has a point of information he wants to share.

MR. KING: I do, with apologies, Mr. Speaker.

Just for the information of the House, on Tuesday, April 23, the Resource Committee will meet in the House of Assembly at 9:00 a.m. – that is here – to review the Estimates of the Department Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

As well, the Government Services Committee will meet in the House of Assembly - right here - at 6:00 p.m. to do the Department of Transportation and Works.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: This House now stands adjourned until 1:30 on Tuesday.

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