



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVII

SECOND SESSION

Number 20

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

Tuesday

14 May 2013

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 our Chambers, Mr. Gilbert Osmond, a member of the Arnold's Cove 50 Plus Club, who is accompanied by his daughter Janet Abbott, today.

Welcome to our Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of Lewisporte; the Member for the District of Humber Valley; the Member for the District of St. Barbe; the Member for the District of Humber West; and the Member for the District of Mount Pearl North.

The Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Zion United Church of La Scie upon the celebration of their 50th anniversary.

On April 27, Saturday night, my wife and I had the privilege to celebrate this special event with the people of La Scie and surrounding area. The Lay Leadership, former clergy, and the church congregation are to be commended for their steadfast faithfulness, zeal, and passion in serving the people of the area in the past fifty years.

The message of love, peace, and reconciliation has been heralded, impacting the social, mental, physical and spiritual needs of numerous recipients as they open their hearts. The occasion was marked by a tasty dinner,

encouraging remarks by former leaders, punctuated with a few jokes, followed by an inspirational concert by SEEDS of HOPE.

Reverend Bruce Rideout and his team are to be applauded for their present ministry and for organizing such a memorable event.

I respectfully invite all hon. colleagues in this hon. House to join me in congratulating La Scie Zion United Church for a wonderful evening on the occasion of their 50th anniversary of ministry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for the District of Lewisporte.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VERGE: That is pretty weak accolades, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. VERGE: I rise today to recognize the members of Lewisporte Collegiate Drama Club who recently won the Regional Drama Festival in Grand Falls – Windsor. Their play entitled *I'm Still Here* was written by teacher-director Pam Cole and centres around the struggles of one family dealing with the early onset of Alzheimer's disease.

This play provides a dual storyline of the younger Sara growing up with her childhood sweetheart and discovering that she has Alzheimer's. Juxtaposed to that storyline is the older Ms Sara having regressed further into the worsening stages of Alzheimer's. These two storylines intersect when the family must make the difficult decision to place Sara in a facility that specializes in care for Alzheimer's patients.

The play is powerful and an emotional depiction of the reality of Alzheimer's and its effect on all those who are touched by this disease.

In addition to winning the regional festival, members of Lewisporte Collegiate Drama Club won several other awards. Outstanding Supporting Actress Awards went to Kristen Burse, Amber Tremblett and Jessica Boyd; while Andrew Greenham received the Overall Best Male Actor Award.

Members, please join me in sending congratulations to all members of the cast and crew for a great production.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Humber Valley.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Xavier Junior High School of Deer Lake on their Grade 8 girls' and Grade 9 boys' victories at recently held provincial basketball tournaments.

The Xavier Grade 8 girls' team won the provincial tournament that was recently held in Lewisporte. Heather Janes of Xavier was named tournament MVP and four different Xavier players were named Player of the Game throughout the tournament. These young ladies were coached by Ryan Chaulk, with the assistance of Jo-Ellen Chaulk.

The Xavier boys' team won provincial honours at the Grade 9 provincial basketball tournament held at Templeton Academy in Meadows. Andrew Moss of Xavier was named the tournament's MVP. This team was coached by Dave Parsons and Trevor Lodge, assisted by Cameron Sparks.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in extending congratulations to the Grade 8 girls' and the Grade 9 boys' basketball team from Xavier Junior High of Deer Lake on their recent provincial basketball victories. It is through athletic events, such as these

tournaments, that lifelong memories are created for these students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize the work of the Lifesaving Society, Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Lifesaving Society, LSS, is a national volunteer organization and registered charity comprised of ten provincial-territorial branches, tens of thousands of individual members, and over 4,000 affiliated pools, waterfronts, and clubs. LSS-NL is responsible for offering swimming, lifesaving, lifeguard and leadership programs, and remains the sole certifying body for lifesavers and lifeguards throughout the Province.

In addition to the bronze medallion, LSS-NL offers a whole range of lifesaving courses. LSS-NL also holds an annual Honour and Rescue Awards ceremony, with the support of Patron, the hon. Frank Fagan, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador. Some LSS-NL national rescue awards include Clarence and Victor Haas of Brent's Cove; Zachary Clarke of Springdale; Lorne Hynes of Baie Verte.

LSS-NL also annually presents the Tina Moores Memorial Cup to Lifeguard of the Year. This award honours the late Tina Moores, a lifeguard, instructor and volunteer who tragically lost her life while rescuing a child at Red Indian Lake in 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing the Lifesaving Society, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Humber West.

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, May 4, I had the opportunity to attend the 16th Annual Western Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Heritage Fair held at G.C. Rowe Junior High in Corner Brook featuring students from the Western School District.

I extend congratulations to the many students who worked diligently to celebrate our history and culture and share their projects with residents of the region. It was indeed a fabulous collection on display through word, picture, poetry, music and song.

I want to extend special thanks to the many teachers and organizers who gave so willingly of their time to make this event a success. To the sponsors: WNLS, Canada's History, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, Historic Sites Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Government, Department of Education, Parks Canada, Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives, The Rooms, Investors Group, and MANL. To the retired teachers who volunteered and to the planning committee made up of Wally Childs, Chrystal Hartley, Brad Lambe, Graydon Pelley, Darlene Sexton, and Christine Elliott, and to all student participants, as well as Honorary Patron Dave LeDrew and his Newfoundland dog.

I ask all hon. members to send congratulations on another successful Heritage Fair.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize athlete Samantha Marsh of Mount Pearl.

Ms Marsh is a highly successful target shooter and has recently returned from Australia where she competed in the sixth Australian Youth Olympic Festival. This is an IOC sanctioned multi-sport event held with the intention of encouraging youth around the world to embark on following a path to the Olympics.

Mr. Speaker, this success is a testament to the hard work and devotion demonstrated by Samantha. She earned this opportunity by finishing second in the 3P Junior Women's Category at the 2012 Canadian Small Bore Nationals. This exposure to world-class talent is great experience as she prepares for the 2015 Canada Winter Games.

I would be remiss not to mention her coach, Mr. Dave Woolridge, who was appointed as the head coach of the team that went to Australia.

I wish Samantha all the best in her future endeavours and hope that she will continue on her path to the Olympics.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Samantha on another major achievement.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to recognize the contributions of the late Dr. Ian Rusted and the role he played in the founding of Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine.

Dr. Rusted was born in Upper Island Cove in 1921. During his career he served in many

distinguished roles including Medical Consultant to the Department of Health, family physician, and most notably Memorial University's first Dean of Medicine.

Dr. Rusted, recognizing the need for rural physicians, developed formal post-graduate and continuing medical education programs. These programs received national and international recognition, and ultimately led to the founding of the Faculty of Medicine in 1967.

Today, as a result of his efforts, we are fortunate to have one of only seventeen medical schools in Canada. Since its creation, Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine has graduated over 2,000 students and is nationally recognized as a leader in developing rural physicians.

Memorial University continues to produce high-quality physicians who are positively impacting our health care system. Our Province currently has more active physicians practicing than ever in our history, half of whom are graduates of Memorial's Faculty of Medicine.

Our government continues to support the medical school. Through Budget 2013, \$14.6 million is being provided for the continued expansion of the Faculty of Medicine and construction of the Craig L. Dobbin Genetics Research Centre. This expansion will increase the medical class size from just over sixty students to more than eighty students, starting in the fall of 2013, as well as provide space for the growth of leading edge genetic research activity.

Dr. Rusted's contributions were recently highlighted with his induction into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. This honour is bestowed on individuals who have advanced health care and health research in Canada and around the world.

Today, our government remembers and is grateful for Dr. Rusted's contributions to our Province. Together with his family we celebrate his impressive career and his valuable contributions to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Dr. Rusted played a crucial role in medicine and medical education in this Province. He served in many roles, including the Director of Medical Education as well as the first Dean and Professor of Medicine at MUN. Almost fifty years later, MUN as we know has a world-class med school and it is pioneers like the doctor who we have to thank.

It is interesting. We actually had a very informative meeting this morning with some young med students from Memorial University, second years and a first year. They talked about some of the challenges they are facing. I know they met with the minister as well. Hopefully we can work together with these med students to conquer these challenges, one of which is ensuring we know what stream these physicians want to go in when they specialize, whether it is in rheumatology or whatever specialization, so we can keep these home-grown doctors right here in the Province where they want to be and that they are not forced to go out of the Province. So we hope to continue with that.

Again, I think it comes back to the fact that we have a fine individual in Dr. Rusted, who over his years in service provide a lot to this Province. Certainly, his induction into the Medical Hall of Fame was well recognized and well deserved. We congratulate his family.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. It is a wonderful honour for Dr.

Ian Rusted to be inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

MUN's Facility of Medicine said Rusted's contribution to health care in this Province is immeasurable. He overcame fierce opposition to help establish MUN's medical school in 1967, at a time when medical schools were all being established only in larger cities. He was inspired by the need for physicians with the interest in skills needed to serve rural patients.

Dr. Rusted's commitment is an example that the government should continue to follow and build on, and to continue his vision, Mr. Speaker. Now more than ever, it is critical that this government develop a health human resource plan so that our medical grads can stay and serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have met with them and this is what they want. It is what he always wanted.

Again, I congratulate his family and say thank you for sharing him with us.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to highlight another example of how this government is partnering with the fishing industry to maintain a competitive edge in the global marketplace. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to announce approximately \$65,000 of funding for the Fish, Food, and Allied Workers so they can pursue Marine Stewardship Council Certification of our provincial lobster fishery.

The Marine Stewardship Council, or MSC, offers a certification process that is the most widely recognized wild fishery sustainability standard in the world. When a fishery gains this certification, it tells the consumers that the fishery is carried out in a way that protects the resource for current and future generations.

Consumers in key international markets such as Europe and the United States are more eco-aware than ever, and are placing a premium on

fisheries that can demonstrate a responsible and sustainable approach to providing seafood products. MSC certification will be vital to maintaining access to these markets in the future, protecting the reputation of our lobster products, and assuring the industry can attract the best possible price.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a tremendous track record for helping industry players enhance and promote the sustainability of their practices, having contributed over \$310,000 since 2008 to assist with the eco-certification of various fisheries. I am proud to say that this investment has resulted in 82 per cent of the landed value of our provincial fisheries being certified or in assessment for certification. I am also pleased to note that our efforts to promote sustainability do not end there.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only Province in Canada that is solely funding its own offshore fisheries research through the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystem Research and other partnerships. Since 2010, the provincial government has committed more than \$12 million to enhance our understanding of our changing ecosystem and protect the sustainability of the industry.

Our billion dollar fishing industry remains key contributors to the success of our provincial economy, and this government will continue to work with the industry to protect the sustainability and reputation of these industries for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy. This is a good news message and it is always good news when the government is working with the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union, unlike a year ago when they were threatening to cut off

funding if they did not go along with what they wanted them to do. This is certainly a move in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, the fishery employs approximately 20,000 people in our Province, being the largest sector in terms of employment for us, and approximately 80 per cent of those people are members of the FFAW. The minister keeps referring to it as a billion dollar industry. I certainly look forward to the day when he can put a two in front of that billion, and it is a \$2 billion industry. In fact, it is closer to being possible than many would think.

A prominent fisheries commentator, Bob Verge, has said we throw away approximately \$500 million worth of product in waste. There is underutilized species and there are better marketing techniques and arrangements, such as the agreement the Province entered into with OCI back in December. At that time, the Opposition took no position. We would not criticize it, but nearly five months have passed now and I certainly look forward to a Ministerial Statement telling us in the near future how that project is going and whether there are more opportunities for other fish processors with the OCI yellowtail.

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. On April 8 I issued a release calling for lobster certification, so I am delighted to see this statement. This is good investment and needed as we are certainly in catch-up mode.

The Marine Stewardship Council recently certified Maine lobster as sustainable, giving the state a competitive advantage as retailers and wholesalers in Europe and the US demand and

are willing to pay a premium for product labelled fish sustainability. We need continuous promotion of our provincial seafood and our responsible fishing practices. I am very encouraged by this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Acting Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to provide an update on the progress of Atlantic Canada's CyberSafe Girl Initiative.

In August 2010, the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women held their first annual meeting and at this time they shared concerns on cyber-violence.

Cyber-violence is the use of the Internet to harm or intimidate another person and includes name calling, teasing, threatening, starting rumours, posting embarrassing or degrading pictures, or encouraging violence. Acts of cyber-violence take place through e-mail, social media Web sites such as Facebook or Twitter, blogs and on-line games.

To address this disturbing issue, the Atlantic ministers committed to creating an initiative that provides educational tools to youth, parents and educators.

From this commitment, the CyberSafe Girl Initiative was developed. This initiative focuses on creating awareness and preventing cyber-violence being perpetrated against young girls on-line. The Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women were pleased to officially launch the CyberSafe Girl Initiative campaign in St. John's on October 11, 2012 – International Day of the Girl.

Through the CyberSafe Girl Initiative, a Web site and three fact sheets were developed to

promote safe Internet usage for young girls. These fact sheets, entitled 10 Tips for Girls, 10 Tips for Parents, and What Everybody Needs to Know, are available throughout Atlantic Canada. In our Province, the Department of Education assisted with the distribution of the CyberSafe Girl fact sheets earlier this month to Newfoundland and Labrador schools with students in Grades 7 to 9.

The CyberSafe Girl Initiative was also recently showcased during the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York on March 6. During this international event, two of the Atlantic Canadian Status of Women Ministers presented background information on the initiative and highlighted interactive components, including the fact sheets and Web site, to emphasize that ending cyber-violence against girls is a global effort; one that our Province is proud to be part of.

Mr. Speaker, the Atlantic Ministers will continue to make progress and spread the word with this initiative in the collective effort to end cyber-violence. I encourage all families in Newfoundland and Labrador to join this effort by reviewing these fact sheets and visiting cybersafegirl.ca to learn more about cyber safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. The Internet plays a predominant role in our lives today, and it is a virtual meeting place where seeming anonymity provides a platform for harassment.

Girls tend to bully differently than boys, using ostracism and rumours to exclude and humiliate, and hiding behind a computer screen makes it easier to join in. Sadly, this behaviour brings bullies together at the expense of others and it is important to educate the public on how cyber-bullying is not as anonymous as it might seem.

Certainly, girls are not only targeted online by peers, but also predators. Child luring is a disturbing behaviour made easier by the use of Internet and social media sites such as Facebook. Educating children and parents about warning signs is crucial to equip kids growing up in today's virtual world.

Beyond bullying, the Internet puts even more pressure on girls to be thin and beautiful with countless images popping up. The psychological damage imposed on girls in their exposure to such images is just as much a threat to the girls' well-being.

Kudos to the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women on this important initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

There is nothing more wonderful we can do for our young girls than to develop programs that empower them. I applaud the Cybersafe Girl Initiative.

Social media is a fantastic medium that opens up the world to so many. It has the potential to take us places and connect us with people we never thought possible before. It is imperative, Mr. Speaker, we equip all our citizens with a thorough understanding of how social media works so they can be safe; but it is equally imperative that we not discourage or frighten girls or any of our citizens and cause them to fear the medium, but instead give them the tools and knowledge so they can embrace it and be fully engaged.

I applaud this initiative; however, we still have 190 communities without broadband and forty schools without broadband. What an impetus to encourage this government to ensure that high-

speed Internet is available to every young girl in the Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Private members' motions are brought forward for debate in this House by MHAs who are not in Cabinet. They are designed to allow backbenchers and Opposition MHAs to bring forward motions for government to consider. Yet, yesterday the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island tabled evidence that the Premier's office is telling backbenchers what motions to bring forward.

I ask the Premier: Why are you controlling the issues that MHAs can and cannot discuss in this House?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if it is a question of communications between the Premier's office and this caucus that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, we communicate all the time on a daily basis back and forth. We share information back and forth. That is what a team does. That is a well-oiled caucus does. We do not make any apologies for that to the Leader of the Opposition or anybody else in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The PMR is a little separate. It gives the MHAs like us and backbencher MHAs to let their positions be brought forward, too. The evidence that was tabled yesterday is very clear and similar to the type of control that Stephen Harper demands over his MPs. The Premier's office gave instruction to the MHA, saying, Dave has to say the following.

So I ask the Premier: Is dictating control over your MHAs one of the recommendations of the secret \$150,000 taxpayer-funded PR makeover?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his efforts with regard to our caucus, but they are absolutely unnecessary. We do not need any help from the people of the Opposition. This is a healthy, happy caucus where we have –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: – strong communication, Mr. Speaker, between all members. Do we have questions of process sometimes that we help one another with? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we communicate on a daily basis, one with the other. We are very proud of that on this side of the way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, when you tell the MHA you have to do this that is not communication; that is a directive. That is saying you have no choice; you have to do this.

Mr. Speaker, not only is the Premier's office controlling what MHAs say, but personal e-mail accounts such as Hotmail, were being used to send talking points instead of government e-mail. Using personal e-mails is a roundabout way to hide access to information. We have seen this with PIN numbers and poll-padding.

So I ask the Premier: Why do you insist on secrecy and instruct your staff to use personal e-mail? Does not the draconian Bill 29 offer enough secrecy to this government and your office?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the last two months I have had meetings with Premier Selinger, Premier Redford, and Energy Ministers of Canada on energy policy that is extremely important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I have had a meeting with Premier Kathleen Wynne of Ontario, again around energy issues important to her province and to us. I have had meetings with Premier Ghiz, Premier Alward, and Premier Dexter in Nova Scotia about energy, about EI reform, about procurement in Atlantic Canada, about harmonization of criteria for apprentices in Atlantic Canada, and not one question, Mr. Speaker, not one question from leaders of the Opposition. What, in fact, he is worried about is our caucus – and you ought to be worried about our caucus because we are strong and we are united and we have a vision and a plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I am worried about your caucus actually, so are many people in this Province worried about your caucus –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: Because the decisions we have seen in Budget 2013 is making us all worry. The next generation is starting to worry, too.

The way government has tabled a private member's motion yesterday made a mockery of this Legislature. In an e-mail printout from the Premier's staff that some details were even scribbled out right here. This disorganized and unprofessional behaviour illustrates a larger issue that the Premier and her government have no respect for this House at all.

I ask the Premier: Why do you treat this Legislature, the symbol of democracy in our Province, in such disdain?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition would like to convince Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that on this side of the House we are as disorganized as they are over there.

Mr. Speaker, if we were trying to keep things secret, we would hardly table them here in the House of Assembly. This is navel-gazing. It is small-mindedness. We need to get back to the serious issues that are important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Can you confirm that two parts of the regulations which you imposed upon the CICPO group five years ago were deemed today in a unanimous decision of our Court of Appeal to be ultra vires or invalid and that the court awarded costs against your government at both trial and appeal level?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm is a victory for the beneficiaries of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Mr. Speaker, the regulation that required a pharmacy to give 120 days notice prior to discontinuing participation in the NLPDP was upheld by the courts.

Those regulations were developed in response to our stated intentions to make sure that the beneficiaries of this Province were protected, and they were. Mr. Speaker, further to that, the decision reinforces government's right to make such regulations in this Province. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador need to be comforted by this decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, we have lost cases in Quebec with the Régie, we have had the Abitibi mess, and now we have this situation.

Can you tell us that due to the heavy-handed action of our former minister, what are the costs of this decision against the people of this Province, the taxpayers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we are concerned about in this government is the most vulnerable of our populations. What we are concerned about is ensuring that people who need access to our Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Plan are getting access to it. Our concern was about the protection of those people here in Newfoundland and Labrador. That also was the concern that the court upheld.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, during Estimates the Minister of Transportation and Works committed to provide two engineering reports for the Corner Brook hospital, the Stantec and the Hatch Mott MacDonald reports. The minister confirmed that he would provide them.

I ask the minister, it has been three weeks since I asked in Estimates: Will you now live up to your commitment and provide us with these reports?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had some good discussions during Estimates. During the period of time that there were discussions being asked, the member opposite asked for some documents. While my deputy and I had conferred on the question, he went on and started saying: oh, thank you very much, I look forward to it. He has been doing it ever since. I do not know where he is getting his information from, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, he has made a request, we are reviewing his request and making consideration to it. We have to bear in mind that we have an obligation and responsibility to protect private

information. We have a responsibility to respect any proprietary or commercially sensitive information. We will review his request. We will abide by the laws in the Province that govern such requests, and we will follow up on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister, if you can tell me what is so private about engineering reports that are going to benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people in Western Newfoundland, I would love to hear the answer. What is so private about an engineering report?

I say to the minister, Mr. Speaker, that during Estimates you and your deputy minister did confer. You did confirm and it is in Hansard.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the member to direct his comments to the Chair.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, it is in Hansard, during Estimates that the minister said, yes, we will provide those reports.

If we are going to uphold the spirit of the House and follow through on Estimates, which we are supposed to see what is being spent in the Budget, I ask the minister: Will you please table those two reports which you committed to at Estimates hearings?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, over and over again, the Member for Bay of Islands has gotten up and talked about what is in Hansard. Well, I would like for him to show it to me because as far as I am told, and

I followed up on this again this morning, Hansard records do not exist for that period of Estimates as of yet. So I do not know where he is getting his information from, Mr. Speaker.

The Hansard records have not been completed. They are not carried out. They are not available to me, because I have been trying to figure out what he was talking about.

As I said, he has made a request. We have to follow the rules and the laws. We have to protect the privacy. We have to protect commercially sensitive information. We have to protect the privacy of individuals who deserve such protection, and we will do that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, faced with a legal challenge, they would certainly lose. The Eastern School District was forced to backtrack on closing two schools last night. Unbelievably, in the same meeting by a notice of motion in a meeting where there were no minutes and no written agenda, they decided to go forward and pass the same motion all over again.

I ask the Minister of Education: Will he stop this school board from closing this school and let his super board deal with it whenever the super board is appointed?

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 elected school boards they have legislative authority to make decisions. The trustees are elected by the people of the Province for the particular region. They make a determination on the operations in regard to school closures. We certainly respect those volunteers and the work they do. Sometimes

they make difficult decisions. We recognize that, but we are not going to interfere in their decision. They have the authority to do the process.

They went back and did reconsideration. Now they are following through with due course and due process. We will certainly see how that goes, but as a government we are not interfering with that. They are the elected trustees and they will do the work which they were elected to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the CEO of the Eastern School District, former Tory MHA Milton Peach, was in the news again for his lavish spending on travel, food, and booze while our students have had to fundraise for basic school items. Presumably the minister approves of this disgraceful conduct as he rewarded Mr. Peach for his scandalous spending by appointing him to the transition team.

I ask the minister: Given Mr. Peach's complete loss of credibility, will he remove Mr. Peach from the transition team?

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, elected school boards as well has legislative authority to determine policy and procedures. Having said that, last year there was direction given to the school boards to look at expenditures, look at efficiencies, and look at personal development for attendees and what the cost was in terms of that. Also, look at expenses related to entertainment expenses.

At that time, it was certainly determined that changes needed to be made. Changes have been made. They have been scaled back and brought in-line to what people expect today in terms of

expenses related to entertainment. It was taken care of. It is done. It is in place. Going forward those rules are now in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, in addition to spending for good times here at home, Mr. Peach spent over \$50,000 last year to travel outside the Province. This is just outrageous. This board spent twice as much as any other board in the Province. Clearly, the Eastern School Board trustees and their CEO Milton Peach, has shown themselves to be incompetent, big spenders, and totally out of touch with reality.

I ask the minister: Will he dismiss this board to prevent them from even more waste and mistakes in the last few months of their reign?

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 I said earlier, these are volunteers. We certainly respect the work they do in Newfoundland and Labrador. They make difficult decisions at times; a lot of time they put in. We certainly respect that knowledge of people on the ground in Newfoundland and Labrador who are helping to build our educational system.

In regard to expenses, as I said, they have gone back to last year and reviewed. We have changed some of the policy and directive the school districts have, in regard to expenses and how that should be administered in the boards. We feel going forward that we are in a good position now, but we do recognize there are professional development and other expenses that are required.

We certainly support them in that. Again, we have gone back and looked at that, the school boards have, and we are comfortable where they are now in terms of expenses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: On one school board bash they spent \$1,600 on booze for forty people. That is \$40 a head. I hope we also paid for the transportation home so we do not get sued for some impaired driver where people might be killed by our school board trustees.

Mr. Speaker, the minister only wishes to defend the indefensible. If the minister is not going to do the right thing and dismiss Mr. Peach and the board, will he at least stand up for the taxpayers and order a complete audit of the Eastern School Board's disgraceful spending and attempt to recover any amounts improperly spent?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the authority to make policies and procedures rest with the school board entity, and certainly the one in question. At the time those expenses were approved, those procedures were in place.

As I said, that has gone back to be revisited. Today, what the expectation is – changes have been made, those have been altered. As I said, moving forward we are confident in terms of what is in place now.

We are respectful of those volunteers and the work they do, and we are going to continue to support them, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, in August 2011, ahead of the general election, government made a \$17 million promise to Canada Fluorspar to conduct a deepwater marine terminal at St. Lawrence. Two years later, people are still waiting for work.

When can we expect this publicly funded business to start hiring people, I ask the minister?

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, we are very excited of a \$100 million project, a \$17 million investment by this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: On the Burin Peninsula, our commitment is to the wharf infrastructure. I understand a company had to do a review in regard to cost escalation.

The latest we hear is they are still very committed, looking to get started this year and tendering work for the wharf infrastructure, which is a \$100 million project in rural Newfoundland and Labrador that we partnership with the private sector, and we are proud of it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, despite this delay, government has already paid out \$637,000 to this company.

I ask the minister: What exactly did the people get for the \$637,000?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we committed to the actual infrastructure of the wharf as part of the \$600,000. It is engineering design to get the project started, to get tenders out. The tender has been put out in public. I understand it is getting very close to closing. At that point there will be a selection made in terms of starting the \$70 million in regard to the wharf infrastructure and moving this \$100 million project forward.

The hon. member is against the aquaculture industry on the South Coast. Surely he is not against this in St. Lawrence. I do not know, but we are for economic development. We are going to fully support it and it is a great opportunity for the Burin Peninsula.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains, time for a quick question without preamble, please.

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, this Justice budget cut –

MR. SPEAKER: A quick question, please, no preamble.

MR. EDMUNDS: (Inaudible) and Aboriginal victims are impacted by this.

I ask the minister: Will you take into account the further impacts on Aboriginal victims of crime in this budget when it is revisited?

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Last spring this government showed interest in an east-west energy grid in Canada. It is funding a major project that would bring energy to the Maritimes, and it has let it be known that a major reason for building Muskrat Falls is to serve mining interests in Western Labrador. This government seems to be concerned about everything except the energy needs of people on the South Labrador Coast.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: What is her plan for the replacement of diesel-generated energy on the South Labrador Coast?

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 am glad the Leader of the NDP recognizes the value of Muskrat Falls, not only for ratepayers here on the Island in the Province, but for industrial development, particularly in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we have two pilot projects that have been completed in Labrador in terms of energy efficiency and finding smaller projects to replace the diesel, either in wind or small hydro. Currently, we have identified several sites on the South Coast of Labrador where small hydro may be feasible, Mr. Speaker, and work is progressing on those fronts as we speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the Premier: What is her hope in terms of the timeline for that work that is happening?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that work is ongoing. The studies will take the amount of time that they take. We have identified in the last two years sites that have potential, particularly for hydro development. We have also looked at wind.

We have a commitment to all of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly to people on the Coast of Labrador, Mr. Speaker, who are circumvented, particularly in their commercial activities, by their lack of access to an energy grid or any other source of power. We have made that commitment to them, and we are going to keep following up on that commitment. We all look forward to the day when we can see diesel replaced by renewable energy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I assume it is Nalcor that is doing that work. I wish they would put that information on-line because I have searched and the only thing they are talking about is Ramea.

We know that Nalcor has been working on a wind hydrogen diesel project in Ramea which it expects will deliver reliable and cost-effective electricity to customers in the future. Customers on the South Labrador Coast are getting no alternative to diesel that they are aware of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – and will get no energy from Muskrat Falls, though the transmission lines will go through their region.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Can she be more specific for the people on the South Labrador Coast, and explain to them why the transmission lines are not going to affect them?

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 wish the Leader of the NDP would really stop playing catch-up.

In terms of our discussion around Muskrat Falls in this House, we have talked at length about power to the South Coast of Labrador and why it is not feasible to run power lines down there, because ratepayers pay for the cost of electricity generation. Because of the small number of people and the cost of running the energy lines down there, Mr. Speaker, it would be almost impossible for ratepayers to afford electricity from Churchill Falls. Those are the facts of it, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the South Coast of Labrador are well informed about Nalcor's intentions and this government's intentions. Why don't you catch-up with...

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am going to point out that it will be more than the people on the South Coast of Labrador who are going to have to be worried about the rate they are going to be paying for electricity down the road.

In recent years, government has earmarked public funding for wage increases to keep home support workers from leaving their jobs. Mr. Speaker, getting fair wages for these workers was not just a deal between the union and private businesses; it was supported by government to make sure there would be enough workers in the essential health care occupation.

Why is the minister refusing to acknowledge government's responsibility for making sure that seniors and people with disabilities have the home care they need to survive?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that at least today she is acknowledging that these are private businesses. Private businesses negotiate with their employees. They develop their terms. The employees decide under what terms they are going to work for that private business.

Government has no part in that, Mr. Speaker, but what we do have a part in is the provision of home care in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why we have invested \$161 million in this year's Budget. We will continue the home support program that we have in place in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It is so disturbing that the minister refuses to acknowledge publicly the money that government put in each year until this year to help subsidize those wages.

Mr. Speaker, home support workers are a group of predominantly female workers who earn slightly more than minimum wage, but provide important support to seniors and people with disabilities. These workers are caring for the most vulnerable in our society but government holds the purse strings and seems to devalue their work.

Mr. Speaker, why won't this government provide decent wages for home support workers?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Mr. Speaker, I am going to reiterate what I have already told this House and the member opposite. We are very concerned about home care and home support in this Province. That is why we have invested \$161 million. Mr. Speaker, that is \$123 million annually of new money that this government has brought to the table for home support. We have reduced the client contribution by \$291 a month.

Mr. Speaker, we still have a very viable home support program in this Province. We will continue to invest in it. We will continue to ensure that the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities in this Province are met.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, there is lack of echocardiogram service at St. Anthony Hospital despite a staff complement and equipment. The CEO agreed to conduct a review some months ago. He has since confirmed the service would not be added. So I requested the information used to base this decision. Mr. Speaker, the CEO, in a recent e-mail, said there was no written report.

Will the Minister of Health restore accountability and direct her CEO to produce a report, or is she okay with decisions made based on discussion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is referring to an operational decision within one of our RHAs. Mr. Speaker, we have very, very competent people in our RHAs who have expertise in all of these areas, who made those decisions based on evidence, based on facts, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, evidence-based decision making is something that we support on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, if the member would like me to consult with the RHA and the CEO in terms of that particular decision, then I will; but I will tell the member opposite these are operational decisions inside of our RHAs. They are not decisions that we look at every day inside of the Department of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, certainly for accountability, we should have written documentation when we are making such decisions.

Three weeks ago I requested a meeting with Labrador-Grenfell Health CEO to discuss echocardiogram service and other health-related matters, as he suggested. To date, he has not acknowledged this request but has since penned a letter to the editor of the *Northern Pen*.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health direct her CEO to meet with my office to discuss a ream of health issues, as the majority of people served at these hospitals are my constituents; or will the CEO and I continue to have media conversations?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the CEO of Labrador-Grenfell is doing exemplary work in that region.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Mr. Speaker, I could not be happier with the work that he is doing. Now, the fact that the member requested a meeting three weeks ago and has not had it yet is no surprise, given the amount of work that happens at the particular regional health authority.

Mr. Speaker, let me just enlighten the House a little bit more here. The member opposite has asked me several questions. I have gone out and I have gotten the information for him. I have walked across the House, I sat in the chair next to him, and I gave him that information. I do not know what his problem is in terms of not being able to get information. More than happy to continue to try to find the information the member –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is National Police Week, a time we remember those peace officers who have been killed and injured on the job. We can begin helping them do their job in safety by passing move-over legislation. The government has had move-over legislation on the books now for the last two sessions.

When will we see the government introduce this legislation to protect all emergency workers on our highways?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Mr. Speaker, I have met with the hon. member from across the House and as he well knows our departments are working diligently on putting together a move-over law. When we have all of that information put together and we feel that it is ready to move forward, then we will move forward with it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Province has jurisdiction on land for search and rescue. It has helicopters that are available to perform tasks from ferrying passengers to performing SAR duties. The call for helicopter service this time went through Halifax.

Why the call to Halifax for assistance first when we had one available in Happy Valley-Goose Bay?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: The hon. member has clearly shown, Mr. Speaker, that he does not understand protocol. He does not understand the process that is involved in regard to providing search and rescue to the Province and the rest of Canada. It has to go through the JRCC in Halifax and then the call comes back. It takes a matter of minutes, I say to the hon. member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East, time for a quick question without preamble.

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, do we have a wheels-up protocol as we expect from our federal counterparts in search and rescue?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: As the hon. member knows, I had a meeting with the minister, Minister MacKay, last week. I reiterated that issue in regard to wheels up, thirty minutes, is an adequate service and that is the service we require in this Province. This is the action we are asking of the federal minister to place in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry. The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. MCGRATH: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to table the annual report of the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities on operations carried out under the Automobile Insurance Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Notices of Motion.

Answers to Question 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 the offshore of the West Coast of the Island of Newfoundland is recognized as a region containing potentially billions of barrels of oil; and

WHEREAS hydraulic fracturing could be an accepted and effective method of petroleum discovery and exploration, and is compatible with the protection of the natural environment and water sources when executed within the context of a comprehensive regulatory framework; and

WHEREAS the petroleum exploration sector needs the certainty and confidence of a stable regulatory regime; and

WHEREAS with that regulatory regime in place oil discovery and industry development could provide unprecedented economic opportunity and bring people home to a currently economically challenged region; and

WHEREAS the undersigned support properly regulated exploration and development of the oil and gas resource in the Province;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce a regulatory framework immediately under which hydraulic fracturing could proceed safely and move this industry forward in Western Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, people are really waiting, they are really literally hanging by their thumbs wondering how this is going to turn out. The people in the whole region do not necessarily believe that it would be a huge development. They certainly do not believe that the scare tactics of the opponents to hydraulic fracturing are helping the industry.

The people in the region I represent, the people who have signed this petition are people from Port Saunders and Port au Choix, which is an hour or so north of the northern most extremity where this Green Point shale is located. They are very concerned. They would like to see economic development. They would like to see the port of Hawke's Bay again receive commercial shipping, tankers that would come and take the oil away.

Mr. Speaker, we hear the fear mongers, the people with scare tactics who are talking about what it means with hydraulic fracturing in the park. If they would just look at the map they would realize – and maybe they do realize – that there is no hydraulic fracturing proposed in the park. Any hydraulic fracturing that is proposed is within enclaves which are clearly provincial land set aside for people of the Province and for provincial development.

This is not about hydraulic fracturing in Gros Morne National Park. This is about people who oppose development and people who want development and jobs. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the issue is development and anti-development. The battlefield is my district and the people who I represent. They do not want to

be used as pawns; they want this to move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS residents of Newfoundland and Labrador have not been provided with detailed evidence providing justification for government's decision to remove Adult Basic Education from College of the North Atlantic; and

WHEREAS residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned that government's decision to remove ABE from the College of the North Atlantic will lead to a decline in already low provincial literacy rates; and

WHEREAS residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned that government's decision will limit access to ABE services in remote regions; and

WHEREAS residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned that government's decision will result in a decline in the availability of supports to assist ABE learners; and

WHEREAS government's research shows that educational attainment is the most important determinant of earnings and sustained attachment to the labour market;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to provide the full details of enrolment, graduation, and funding analysis that were carried out to justify the decision to cut the Adult Basic

Education program at College of the North Atlantic.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has petitioners from all across Labrador, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Sheshatshiu, North West River, quite a number from Goose Bay; other petitioners from Port Hope Simpson, from Hopedale, from Charlottetown and from a number of different communities, Forteau, a variety of different communities across Labrador.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that ABE has been cut in Grand Falls-Windsor, it has been cut in Gander, it has been cut in Corner Brook, and it has been cut in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, one of the hardest hit colleges at College of the North Atlantic.

It has been cut at St. Anthony, Bonavista, and at the Bay St. George campus. Also in Port aux Basques and in Burin, another campus that has been fairly hard hit by these cuts. In Placentia, in Seal Cove, Labrador West, the Baie Verte campus, Clarenville, and the Prince Philip Drive campus.

As has been pointed out time again here in the House of Assembly, we have nothing other than mere sound bite type explanations of why it is that these programs are going to be privatized. College instructors and students and those who are interested in this issue in the community have told us time and again that there are a variety of services that are offered at the College of the North Atlantic that may or may not be available depending on who the provider is going to be for the new privatized Adult Basic Education program –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: 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 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 the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reverse this damaging decision to students and reinstate the ABE programming at the College of the North Atlantic.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a subject that has had considerable attention, as it should, because it was what I think to be a very short-sighted decision. There was one small group of students who got some reprieve this week with the announcement that the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: – program at the Waterford will be continued. It will not be provided by the College of the North Atlantic so we will wait to see who does that; the same as we are going to wait everywhere else.

We did ask the acting minister in Estimates about the ABE tenders that are going out. We

anxiously await those as they come out because we know that it is one thing to put out the tender, then the tender has to be filled and then there is a process. At the end of the day, we want to make sure that these students have the ability to continue this education in the fall.

We all know that these students, many of whom have barriers, need to get this and they need it sooner. The quicker they can do this, the quicker they can transition into other trades to fill this work shortage that this government talks about but seems to take actions that contradict their goals.

Again, I could continue on that, but I only have a couple of minutes. I just want to say I look forward to seeing these tenders and these RFPs and hoping that more places have an ability to achieve this service, as the Premier said, but again, I will cross my fingers and hope for that.

It says nothing about the over 100 people that this government let go, qualified instructors at the College of the North Atlantic that this government let go and basically said thank you for your service but you are no longer required. We are going to do it for cheaper and easier. Even though they have done nothing yet to show us how they came to these numbers, which again, depending on who you talk to on any given day the number changes.

Given that the government refuses to table the documents that show us how they came to these numbers, I am sure they do not have anything to hide. Maybe I will send a personal e-mail off, we will get a personal e-mail back, and that is how we will get to the bottom of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

To the hon. House of Assembly in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament

assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we know that even more so now than ever how important it is for us to have access to information. With these drastic cuts that we have seen in this Budget, we constantly are asking for information, on what basis were they made, what were the plans – if, in fact, there were any plans, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if they are withholding the plans or if there were not any plans. It is hard to know, because they are not forthcoming.

With all the core mandate reviews that have been done almost in every department, we need to see those. We need to see if, in fact, what those core mandate reviews were revealing, and also how departments are functioning and how these cuts affect whether or not departments can maintain their core mandate reviews, can deliver their core mandate reviews, can execute their core mandate reviews.

Hiding behind Bill 29 is old-style politics, Mr. Speaker, and we know that this government said that its hallmark was that it was going to be a government of transparency, openness, and accountability. Bill 29 is the actual opposite of that. It is the nemesis of that, and I cannot believe that still this government is holding on to it.

Again, it is old-style politics, it is hiding, and now again more than ever, particularly when we see the rollout of Muskrat Falls, how much even more important it is that this government be absolutely transparent, absolutely open and accountable to the people of the Province. The money that belongs to the people of the Province is being spent on very large projects and it affects then also the small aspects of the people's lives, particularly program delivery and social service delivery, and it is very important to have a clear idea of what is going on.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is all that I want to say at this point. I think again that –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member that her time has expired.

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

MR. SPEAKER: 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 residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS there has been an agreement between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Government of Canada to recognize the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the Newfoundland Federation of Indians and the Government of Canada to provide a fair and equal review of all our applications.

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a simple request for fairness. It is not a request for money. It is not a request for any sort of benefits. It is not a request for pensions. It is not a request for a raise in pay. It is simply a request that our provincial government would assist, would intervene, would offer to help and would simply, maybe through Aboriginal Affairs, maybe through Intergovernmental Affairs, make representations on behalf of individuals who have submitted applications clearly within the timeline, potentially within the guideline and wish to have their application assessed.

It is a request to our government to speak on behalf of up to 20 per cent of the people of the Province. Mr. Speaker, that would have to be seen as probably the largest ethnic group in the

Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, bar none. They simply are asking for their applications to be assessed so they can be recognized.

Mr. Speaker, we have not had a very good history in this Province with our relations with native people. I would hazard a guess that many people in this very Chamber, maybe even approaching majority, may well have some native ancestry from some parts of the Island and some parts of Labrador. It is very important that people be able to have their genealogy recognized and have their status recognized. It is a simple request to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to help us.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member that his 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 students of the Adult Basic Education program at the College of the North Atlantic do not wish to attend privatized educational facilities; and

WHEREAS 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.

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I received a number of these petitions, as well as other members. I believe even today, this is the third time this petition has been presented into the House of Assembly. It is a clear indication based on the number of people who have signed on many occasions, calling for this decision to be reversed.

They have some real, legitimate concerns. They do not know where things are headed. There is a lot of uncertainty out there and there is a lot of information that has not been provided when it comes to looking at how this decision was truly made.

This petition is signed by residents in Labrador, in Sheshatshiu and the North West River. The people of Labrador here in these communities are very concerned about where the delivery of Adult Basic Education is going to be with the removal of the program from the College of the North Atlantic, as well as looking at if the number of people are going to be accommodated. So there are legitimate concerns by people all across the Province in Newfoundland and Labrador as to how ABE is going to be delivered.

We do not see a timeline. We have not seen the RPF, the tenders called. When we had something that worked really well, and to see it just cut. We do not really know what type of savings is there and what overall impact this is going to have on the education system and where people are headed for their careers. This is certainly something people are speaking out loudly about, Mr. Speaker.

I put forward this petition in the House of Assembly to urge government and to urge all members of the House to make these changes.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

WHEREAS home care allows the elderly and people with disabilities to remain within the comfort and security of their homes, home care also allows people to be discharged from hospital earlier; and

WHEREAS many families find it very difficult to recruit and retain home care workers for their loved ones; and

WHEREAS the PC Blue Book 2011 as well as the 2012 Speech from the Throne committed that government would develop a new model of home care and give people the option of receiving that care from family members; and

WHEREAS government has given no time commitment for when government plans to implement paying family caregivers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement a new home care model to cover family caregivers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this again is another request that does not actually cost government money. It does not cost government more money than is actually already being paid because the individuals who are entitled to health care are entitled to health care. The issue is who provides the home care, rather? Whoever provides the home care, it could be a stranger, it could be a relative, but it must be an accredited person to a qualified individual.

Government has already indicated in this year's Budget that enough funds have been committed for approximately three-quarters of the year. Does that mean we will wait for one-quarter of the year to pass and then try to ramp up instantly to 100 per cent coverage and then run through the year?

Mr. Speaker, that is not efficient. It would be far better if the government would move forward with the promise, move forward with the commitment, start approving people, and moving this system to benefit everybody that this promise was made to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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 transgendered people face high risk of discrimination, violence, unemployment, and lack of access to housing and other services; and

WHEREAS a recent EGALE Canada survey found that 90 per cent of transgender youth hear transphobic comments regularly from other students and one-quarter hear such comments from teachers; and

WHEREAS the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that nearly half of trans youth seriously considered suicide and one-fifth attempted it in the previous year; and

WHEREAS all individuals should have equal opportunity to live their lives and meet their needs without being hindered or prevented by discriminatory practices based on gender identity or gender expression;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to amend the Human Rights Act to include gender identity and gender expression in the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be able to present this petition, as the Minister of Justice is here in the House. He is able to hear this petition on behalf of so many families. This is a petition not only on behalf of transgender youth, but it is on behalf of their families, their communities, their schools, and their workplaces.

Nobody wants to see discrimination, Mr. Speaker. It does not benefit anyone. As a matter of fact, it is a hindrance. It is a negative influence that can be in the place of school. It is a negative influence that can be in the place of work.

We have an obligation. As a government, there is an obligation to do as much as we possibly can to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation, on sex, on ability or physical disability, and on this issue of gender identity and gender expression.

I do not know how many times I have gotten up in the House and spoke about this. As a matter of fact, the Premier, in the media, said: Oh, she is always standing up in the House talking about the rights for transgendered people.

AN HON. MEMBER: The hon. member (inaudible).

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am. I respond to that: I will get up every day and present this petition if I have to, because this is the right thing. It is the right thing for this government to do. It is the right thing for the Minister of Justice to do. I know that he is a smart man; I assume that he is a smart man and he knows the difference. He knows that the time has come to do this, that human rights legislators

across the globe – across the globe – are dealing with this issue. What do we have to do to drag this Minister of Justice into the twenty-first century to be able to deal with this.?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member her time has expired.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: I am coming to the twenty-first century, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1 that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the Budget, to speak to the main motion that will hopefully pass soon enough to approve the budgetary policies of this government. I have had a chance to speak in Committee, I have had a chance to various pieces of the Budget, but I am very pleased to have an opportunity today to speak to the main motion.

We have heard lots during this Budget debate. There has been lots of coverage of this Budget, perhaps more than any Budget in our recent history. We have also heard lots of criticism of our Budget from the other side and not a lot of it has been constructive.

In fact, we have heard, particularly from the NDP, lots of comments around how this Budget is not good for families and it is not good for

child care, and it is not good for home care and it is not good for poverty reduction. Knowing how this Budget came to be, knowing how we have listened to the people that we represent in –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: – the Province and in our districts, and knowing some of the issues that are important to the people in Mount Pearl North, in Paradise and Mount Pearl, I am going to focus on those issues in the few minutes that I have today, Mr. Speaker. I am going to talk about families. I am going to talk about child care. I am going to talk about home care and poverty reduction. Issues that absolutely matter to people in every community in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will continue to invest strategically in areas that we know matter most to the people of this Province. We listened to what people had to say and we have delivered a Budget that focuses on education, that focuses on health care, and that focuses on issues that truly do matter to the residents that we represent.

Our Budget has really taken into consideration what is important to people and the working families and that is why we see in this Budget \$2.9 billion directly supporting the health and well-being of families. That is why in this Budget we see \$1.3 billion for the K-12 education system and post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That is why we see \$230 million to support communities and to support our residents of those communities. So we have invested in the well-being of families, with steps to put more money into the pockets of hard-working families in Newfoundland and Labrador. One way that we have actually been able to do that, Mr. Speaker, is through having a tax regime that protects Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from onerous tax burdens.

Now, it was just a week ago, maybe two weeks ago, it might have been three weeks ago, that I

heard the Leader of the New Democratic Party on one of the Open Line shows in the morning. She was proposing that now that we have the kind of economy that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, now that we have the kind of prosperity that we have, we should tax people more. We have the ability to tax working families, we have the ability to tax the very people who I am talking about, and that is all we have heard through the course of this debate from the NDP. We have heard no alternatives, no solutions. We have just heard lots of empty promises and the threat of increased taxation, which I find frustrating.

When this government came to power in 2003, the tax burden on families in this Province was absolutely excessive. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that this Premier and this government is not going back there. In projecting a significant deficit earlier this year, we could have made the easy choice to raise taxes quite easily, but we did not. The fact that we have lowered taxes since coming into office speaks to our commitment to helping those working families. We have lowered taxes for working families in Newfoundland and Labrador by over a half billion dollars. We actually have in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, the most competitive tax regime in Atlantic Canada – but you will not hear the parties opposite talking about that.

So we have to advance and continue the growth we are experiencing in this Province, and we have to make sure that there are no increases to personal income taxes, and that is what we have done in this Budget. In fact, we have put a half billion dollars a year back into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians through tax cuts. Just through tax cuts that we have introduced alone, we are talking a half billion dollars of savings to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Now, we know that there are some people in this House who do not support cuts, but young working families who bear the brunt of the tax burden in this Province certainly do support the investments we are making and the tough decisions that we are making.

In recent years, I was really proud to be part of a government that set up the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, speaking of our commitment to children and families. A really core mandate of our government has been to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth. We want to create safer communities. We want to secure prosperity for the next generation, and we need to do that through sound planning for the future.

Through the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, we have announced a number of programs and initiatives that will serve to protect our young people and to enhance programming for children and youth in this Province. Through this Budget, the Budget we are debating in this House today, the Budget that we have been debating for the last number of weeks, we announced \$185 million for program delivery in essential areas for child protection, essential areas like youth services and child care in this Budget.

Our record is clear and strong, Mr. Speaker. We support families and we continue to invest in families and we are continuing to do so through this Budget.

You will often hear members across the House talk about how we do not have plans and we do not have strategies. You will see them all over Twitter and other forms of social media talking about the fact that we do not have a plan. We have taken more proactive steps than any other government in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador to support young working families. We do have a plan. We have many plans. We have a 10-Year Child Care Strategy; that is a prime example.

Under the Budget that we are introducing this year, Mr. Speaker, we allocated \$31.1 million in 2013-2014 for child care in Newfoundland and Labrador, yet members opposite will suggest that we are doing nothing. We continue to implement our ten-year strategy. It is called Caring For Our Future: Provincial Strategy for Quality, Sufficient and Affordable Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are a number of things in that strategy that will directly impact families like mine, families like the Member for Terra Nova, who is expecting another child, I hear. Congratulations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: These investments include a Child Care Subsidy Program to increase capacity in the system, workplace training for early childhood educators. In all, there are eight exciting initiatives to enhance child care in this Province that will support young working families.

We also have a Continuum of Care Strategy, Mr. Speaker, to assist some of the most vulnerable children in our society. It is a first for the Province. It is a groundbreaking piece of work. Budget 2013 will invest a total of \$14.3 million to continue to implement this strategy, and it is working. It is working to improve the care options for children and youth that are in need of out-of-home placement. The investment also includes \$250,000 to launch the second phase of the foster parent recruitment campaign.

I recently chatted with the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, and I was really pleased to hear that campaign is working. Our efforts to recruit more foster families in Newfoundland and Labrador are making a difference. When I see in this Budget that we are going to enhance that investment, I know that is a sound decision and a wise decision.

Since our Continuum of Care Strategy was announced, we have implemented a new four-level system for foster care. It provides compensation that is specific to each level by recognizing the experiences, the training, and the skills of the foster parents who we work with, and matching children and youth with a foster family who best meets the specific needs of those children.

As I said, the Foster a Future...Foster a Child Today promotional campaign is making a real difference in terms of recruiting foster parents. We have issued a Request for Proposals for contracted staff residential placements, which I

believe is a huge step forward for foster care. That is going to be awarded in the coming months.

We have also commenced the initial development of the remaining level for specialized foster homes, again, a really proactive, progressive move forward for foster care. Our commitment to supporting families and children is reflected in our Continuum of Care Strategy as well.

Ensuring the health and safety of kids in this Province is a central commitment of this government. That is why we invest in supports for vulnerable families and children. We understand how important front line people are who make these programs work. That is why we are investing another \$314,000 this year to hire four new front line positions.

That brings the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services total of front line positions in Newfoundland and Labrador today to over 500 people. These new positions will assist the department with improving the programs and services we offer to children, to youth, to their families. It will also help improve caseload management, which is an ongoing challenge for us and we have made huge progress.

We also remain committed to placing social worker students within the department. We have about seventy social work students each year who work in recruitment, and who are recruited and retained through the department so that we do have an influx of new social workers in the Province. We also provide these students with opportunities for exposure and experience in critical areas like child protection.

We are also investing in Labrador. We are making some strategic investments to help vulnerable children in Labrador as well. Funding of \$380,000 in this Budget is provided to continue with the purchase of some staff housing in Labrador to build upon the recruitment and retention of staff in that region.

We have done some other things that you have recently heard about and that people of the

Province have recently heard about. Just as we began the Budget debate in this House, we announced an investment of \$1 million to set up a Task Force on Child Exploitation and Drugs, an effort to make our communities safer and to protect our children. This is a unique partnership between the RNC and RCMP that will focus on serious criminal cases from a dedicated facility.

We have also invested \$750,000 to advance the work that is underway for the development and implementation of a Province-wide 911 system. I know that is important to municipal governments and it is important to residents of communities, particularly rural ones in our Province. It is all about continuing to enhance public safety.

I want to talk specifically about home care because it was raised in Question Period today. It is raised most days. If you simply listen to some of the commentary from members opposite you would assume there is nothing in place to address this growing need in our society, nothing could be further from the truth.

More help for families will come from this Budget's allocation of \$92 million to strengthen long-term care and community support services to help seniors, to help persons with disabilities, to help them achieve independence, Mr. Speaker, to improve their quality of life in their homes and in their communities. That is another major step forward. That has not been reflected in some of the comments we have heard from across the way.

In addition to those dollars and in addition to the money that we spend annually on home care, we have invested over \$550 million –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

MR. KENT: - a half billion dollars in new funding over the last eight years in enhanced long-term care and community support services. This support continues in Budget 2013.

We are seeing \$72 million for the continuation of several long-term care infrastructure projects, facilities in Carbonear, facilities in St. John's. If he would stop chirping long enough to listen, the Member for Bay of Islands would know that we are investing in facilities in Corner Brook as well, in Clarendville, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, in Bonavista.

There is over \$9 million to address growth and the need for additional resources in the Home Support Program. We know that more individuals require this support. There are more applications coming in, which is why we are increasing the funding.

We are also committing over \$6 million in this Budget for the paid family care giving option. We continue to hear members opposite raise it over and over again to suggest that somehow we are not committed to that program. Again, nothing could be further from the truth. In this Budget there are new dollars committed to bringing that program to life. It annualizes to \$8.2 million in 2014-2015.

We have \$1.6 million for the continued implementation of a pilot project for Community Rapid Response Teams, and that will expand to four sites from two this year. It will provide enhanced health services and home support to seniors in their homes. It will ultimately reduce the need for admissions to hospitals in our Province.

We have \$1.5 million for the implementation of enhanced care and personal care homes for a pilot project. That will allow residents to achieve greater levels of care in personal care homes. You will not hear members opposite talking about any of those initiatives that are clearly spelled out in this Budget and in the various Budget documents.

We are also adding another \$624,000 to add 100 new portable subsidies to the Personal Care Home Program. This provides individuals with greater personal care home choices and it brings the total number of subsidies in Newfoundland and Labrador to 2,348. Again, the NDP would tell you we are doing nothing.

There is \$372,000 to introduce forty subsidized respite beds in personal care homes to allow for increased access to respite services in communities all over Newfoundland and Labrador; \$150,000 to enhance palliative care comfort rooms in long-term care facilities and in health centres throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. These are just a few examples of what we are doing to improve home care, to improve support to families, seniors, and some of the folks in our Province who really need this specialized care.

If you listen to the Opposition, particularly the Third Party, you would think that somehow we have abandoned our Poverty Reduction Strategy, which continues to receive national recognition for the positive impact it is having. In addition to the work we are doing on health care, child care, safety, and supporting vulnerable families, we have a Poverty Reduction Strategy that is making a difference. It is one area we are particularly proud of and we are seeing increased investments in that strategy in the 2013 Budget.

We have been able to move from the Province with the highest rate of poverty in Canada to the Province with the third-lowest rate of poverty in Canada. That is a pretty impressive accomplishment, and it is real progress, Mr. Speaker.

We announced approximately \$149 million in this Budget to further support the Poverty Reduction Strategy to improve health and living conditions, education, incomes, and overall well-being of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

It is a comprehensive approach. We have a plan. It is an integrated approach. It is a long-term approach. It is really making a difference in terms of the prevention, the reduction, and the alleviation of poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are now below the national average. This strategy is considered a model for others to follow. Newfoundland and Labrador is a

national leader in this area, but you will hear the crowd opposite continue to suggest that the sky is falling.

We are seeing close to \$150 million invested in continuing initiatives that are directly related to our Poverty Reduction Strategy; \$6.5 million for board and lodging supplements for adults with disabilities who live with family; \$4.8 million for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Supportive Living Program to advance the work of community partners and stakeholders.

Now, if you listen to the Member for St. John's Centre, she would tell you that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is pretty well shut down, that there is nothing going on to address the unique housing needs and challenges we have in Newfoundland and Labrador. These are new investments on top of the great work that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and other agencies of government already are doing. These are new investments that will continue to advance the work of our Poverty Reduction Strategy.

In this Budget we have \$1.2 million to enhance health benefits for Income Support recipients in our Province; \$1.1 million for the Kids Eat Smart Foundation. We have expanded the prescription drug program. We have initiated a dental program. We provide vision care and special diet needs, just to name a few things we are doing through our Poverty Reduction initiatives. We are proud to say that we are making a difference in the lives of people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

This Budget clearly demonstrates that we, as a government, are focused on what is important to the people of the Province. Our Premier and this government are not afraid to make the tough decisions. When I talk about families, I am concerned about the future of my family and the many other families throughout our Province. We need to ensure they are not saddled with debt and with a burden that is created by short-sighted or political opportunistic decision making.

We are committed to meeting the needs of the people of the Province while also maintaining the kind of fiscal responsibility that this government has demonstrated over the past decade.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: We are investing in families. We are investing in health care. We are investing in communities, and we are investing in our children. There are billions of dollars of investments in this Budget, a Budget that the members opposite at some point in the hours or days ahead are likely to stand and vote against, Mr. Speaker.

We are investing billions of dollars to support working families, to avoid irresponsible tax hikes that the Leader of the NDP proposes. If you are in doubt – because she certainly talks out of both sides of her mouth – just listen to Open Line. It was just in the last few weeks that I heard her describe the economic policies, or lack thereof, of the New Democratic Party.

Members opposite can create spin, they can create fear, they can create confusion all they want and they can steal their policies off the Internet, let's get back to the facts. We will continue to do what is responsible for the people of the Province. We will invest in families.

Our government, led by our Premier, will support families through progressive taxation, through investments in health care, investments in education, support for children and youth, investments in safety and policing. With every aspect of our Administration and in every aspect of life, we are committed to families, and, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say I support this Budget.

This Budget proves yet again our commitment to families, and I for one will be voting in favour of the initiatives that I have just outlined.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VERGE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to stand here today and to speak to Budget 2013. I want to start off, first of all, and thank the people of Lewisporte District who have put their confidence in me as their member, and have asked me to represent them in the House of Assembly. For them, I guess I owe a great debt of gratitude, and I certainly want to thank them.

I do not get a whole lot of speaking opportunities, Mr. Speaker, since taking the position as Deputy Speaker in the House of Assembly. A lot of times when speaking opportunities arise or certain bills are being brought forward, I am actually presiding over the proceedings in the House; thus, I am not afforded the same number of speaking opportunities. I certainly am thankful for this opportunity today.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget is a piece of legislation, of course, that we pass each year. The Budget is used to forecast the manner in which government intends to manage the people's finances for the fiscal year that lies ahead. There has been much talk about Budget 2013, and then, of course, about Budget 2014 and 2015 in the time leading up to this budget.

The accounting tells us, Mr. Speaker, that if we, as a government, continue to spend like we have been spending then this year we would end up with an overall shortfall, a deficit that we believe to be unacceptable. We are a responsible government. Mr. Speaker, we need to take measures that protect the long-term health and the financial well-being of this Province. We are never going to lose sight of that fact and that responsibility.

We took government, Mr. Speaker, at a time when the financial health of this Province was very weak. Confidence in our economy and in our Province from both inside the Province and

from outside the Province was extremely low. Our goal was to restore the Province back to a position of economic growth and to a place of balanced budgets, and to be fiscally prudent. We recognized this from the early days of our government and we made a conscious decision to govern according to principle and according to sound fiscal management. I guess to more fully explain, I want to take a brief look back at where we were when we took government and to also look at how far we have come.

Mr. Speaker, in 2003, and in the preceding years, there were deficits that continued to add up year after year. The cumulative effect was a provincial debt that continued to get increasingly higher. The debt of this Province back when we took government in 2003 had risen to a whopping \$12 billion. That meant at that time that every man, woman and child in this Province owed approximately \$23,000.

It was obvious, Mr. Speaker, that trend had to stop. Things needed to be turned around. We had to make tough decisions to turn the financial picture in a positive direction. We had hoped at that time to bring the Province back from a nearly \$1 billion deficit position to a balanced budget and then to a potential surplus within a few years. With surplus budgets, the net debt could be lowered and we could potentially have cash on hand to fund future projects and to avoid borrowing.

In 2004-2005, we had a deficit that year of approximately \$500 million. Compared to nearly \$1 billion the year before, which was what the Liberal government was budgeting in their last year in office, about \$1 billion deficit, Mr. Speaker.

By 2005-2006, things actually had started to turn around for us at a quicker pace than we even anticipated. In just the second year of office we were able to turn a surplus Budget. Mr. Speaker, for six of the following seven years we were able to report surplus Budgets. During that time we made some decisions. We decided that we must stay the course, that we need to be fiscally prudent, and we needed to be wise with the revenue that was coming into the Province.

We used the surplus money to lower our net debt, and we also used it to invest back into the infrastructure and into services for the people of the Province. At that time as well, Mr. Speaker, we had to strike a balance between economic stimulus and fiscal prudence. We had grown to a place where we were able to take control of our own decisions, and to move ahead with renewed confidence and also with a greater sense of pride.

It was at that time, Mr. Speaker, when world economies were collapsing and provinces throughout this country were facing financial turmoil that we had gotten ourselves to a position where we could stave off the negative effects of the recession. How? By investing back into the Province and that is what we did.

At a time when there was a recession looming, we were in a position where we could invest in infrastructure, provide stimulus to the economy, and able to stave off the effects of the recession. One of the projects that we did, Mr. Speaker, was in my own district, a \$30 million investment in a health facility. A great investment it has proven out to be.

Economists and banks at this time were talking about the great way in which our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador was growing and prospering. Even though there were things falling apart internationally, there were things on the decline nationally, economists throughout the country were talking about the great example that Newfoundland and Labrador had provided. We were leading the country in economic growth. We were leading the country in Gross Domestic Product. We were also leading the country in job growth.

As I look back at those times, it was only four or five, five or six years ago, Mr. Speaker, I can see more clearly now that we did, in fact, make the right decisions. We had surplus Budgets and we had to make decisions what to do with that money. It was through sound fiscal management that we were able to have surplus Budgets, then we needed to decide what we would do. We gave raises to our public service people. We hired additional personnel to assist

with the delivery of services. We maintained tuition freezes at Memorial University and at the colleges. Doing all of that, we were still able to reduce taxes for the people.

As well, even doing all of that, we had money to invest in our infrastructure and we built roads and we built schools and we built bridges. We invested in water and sewer facilities, in municipal buildings, in fire departments and in infrastructure from one end of this Province to the other. We invested in it, we provided stimulus, we kept our economy growing, and we restored the infrastructure of this Province back to an acceptable level.

Our Province was pumping and producing, while areas all around us nationally and internationally were fighting to keep their head above water. Mr. Speaker, we have been a government that is an example of wise investments and we have coupled that with fiscal prudence and the people of the Province have been the beneficiaries of this direction that we have taken.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached a point when we were looking forward to this coming year, we had reached a point where our revenues were not as great as they were in recent years so we had to sit back, take stock, and respond in a wise and a prudent manner.

We cannot ignore the fact that oil revenues have been dwindling and that is both from a lower price per barrel of oil and also from a decrease in production levels. We cannot ignore the fact that we now have \$500 million less coming in from taxes. That is thanks to the tax reductions we have made and the additional money we have put into the hands of people.

The NDP, Mr. Speaker, would not have done that. They would increase taxes and they would take more money out of the hands of hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They have said that they would increase taxes, Mr. Speaker. That is their answer to increased expenses.

We cannot ignore the fact that the money we have traditionally gotten from the federal government is now reduced by some \$500 million. We also cannot ignore the fact that our expenses have risen mainly because of the investment we have made in personnel and because of the investments, Mr. Speaker, we have made in health care, in education, in social programs, and in the rebuilding of infrastructure.

So what do we do, Mr. Speaker, to address the current reality? It is a reality that sees our Province in its best position ever. Let us not forget that fact. Companies want to invest here. Consumer confidence remains very high. Tourists are flocking here by the thousands. Opportunities abound, and we have more jobs than at any other time in our history.

With all of this prosperity, government revenue, though, is less than its expenses. So we have to do what is right. We have to do what is prudent. We have to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador remains a place of growth and opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VERGE: One of the ways we do that is we bring the revenues and the Budget back to a surplus as quickly as possible. We will do that, Mr. Speaker, for the long-term health and the well-being of our Province. We will do it because it is the right thing to do. In the longer term, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will thank us for it and they will see that we did the right thing.

We will not run up the debt of this Province irresponsibly. We will not destroy consumer confidence in our Province by spending irresponsibly. We will not discourage multimillion-dollar companies and multibillion-dollar companies from investing in this Province by telling them we will tear up contracts and we will set new terms, as suggested by the NDP. We will not promise the sky and be willing to ramp up debt, increase taxes, and spend this Province into bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker. No, we will not do that; we will do what is responsible.

Mr. Speaker, we have to do what is right. We have to do what is credible. We cannot suggest ludicrous alternatives, such as those put forward by members of the New Democratic Party.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, a journalist in this Province wrote an article, on May 4, actually, and asked some questions about the future direction of the New Democratic Party. I quote from that article. It said, “It happened very quickly this week – but it was a long time coming... It is no longer good enough to simply list all the things the party would like to do for people. It is time for the NDP to start telling people how they will do these things and how they will pay for them.”

These are not my words, Mr. Speaker, this is a journalist in Newfoundland and Labrador asking some pointed questions, doing some digging.

He said the Leader of the NDP and “her caucus have led an aggressive condemnation of the recent provincial budget cuts. But they have never precisely outlined how they would do things differently. He said, “The NDP also talk about the need to look at ways to increase revenues, which either means cutting more economic deals or raising taxes.”

He goes on to say, “The province’s business community is already quietly worried... They fear a renewed expansion of the state financed by an increase in corporate taxes.”

Mr. Speaker, this particular article and this particular journalist went on to ask questions about the wood pellet crusade that has been raised by the Member for The Straits – White Bay North. Again, these are not personal attacks, Mr. Speaker. I have nothing against anybody in this House. I could shake hands and talk to anybody here. These are policy decisions.

When we have, not just our government, but when we have members of the media now questioning the credibility of this party.

He goes on to say, “The MHA for the Straits-White Bay North is a vocal supporter of a

domestic wood pellet industry, going so far as to advocate the wholesale conversion of all public buildings to wood burning as a source of heat and electricity.

“It amounts to a plan to create a domestic market for an industry that has already requested repeated government subsidies.”

The Member for The Straits – White Bay North recently Tweeted, according to this article, and I am just quoting a journalist in this Province, “Government of NL should convert government buildings from heating oil to wood pellets. Let’s save taxpayer money”.

He goes on to say again, the Member for The Straits – White Bay North Tweeted, “When will NL Gov realize energy savings & convert schools, hospitals & public buildings to wood pellets. Much cheaper than electricity.”

The journalist says, “Is that the official NDP policy? Would an NDP government unhook the Health Sciences from the electricity grid in favour of wood pellets? Is that how an NDP government would spend infrastructure dollars?”

He says, the member “has been preaching this for months, along with plans to burn shrimp shells and other biomass to fuel greenhouses, which will provide food security to the Province. Is he freelancing? Or is that the official party line?”

Mr. Speaker, I raise that not to attack the member personally; I would never do that. I raise it because we need credibility in this Province. We need people who will be responsible. We need people in government who will make considered decisions built upon sound research. We need people who will listen to the people and will also be responsible and make sure that no, we are not going to raise taxes irresponsibly. We are not going to ramp the debt of this Province up to an uncontrollable level. We are going to be concerned about the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are going to be concerned about our children and we are not going to be irresponsible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VERGE: Mr. Speaker, responsibility is what our government is all about and that is why we get rave reviews from economists worldwide. That is why our Province, under this government, will continue to grow.

Our Premier is a leader who sets the course in a visionary manner. She is a person who leads by principle. Mr. Speaker, she is genuinely interested in doing only what is in the best interests of the people of this Province. She is not satisfied to make irresponsible decisions just because they are popular. At the end of the day this Premier and this Province will do what is right, regardless of the unsubstantiated, the frivolous criticism that sometimes comes from the other side.

Mr. Speaker, despite that, we will do what is right. This is a good Budget. This is a fiscally responsible approach that lays out a plan for this Province well into the future. It brings us back to surplus within a few years, and, Mr. Speaker, it is the right thing to do.

The people of the Province will see it is the right thing to do. We are doing it because it is the right thing to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I begin, I would just like to offer my condolences to the families of the late Joseph Riche and the late Judge Gordon Seabright, two very hon. gentlemen in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, on a brighter note, I would also like to stand and congratulate our new MP for Labrador, Ms Yvonne Jones –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: A very proud accomplishment. I think, Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a trend and certainly we would like to see that trend applied to our Province in the unlikely event that the Premier can find a candidate for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and call an election. Mr. Speaker, one other thing that was, as a Liberal, good to see, is that the NDP supported a drop more so than in the last general election, a changing trend and one that we look forward to.

Mr. Speaker, on the Budget, I find myself rising in this hon. House on many occasions still waiting for the Budget. The reason I say this is because there have been so many changes to the Budget since it came out that it is starting to confuse everybody. They had decisions on Justice; they had to go back and revisit it and make changes. If the Budget cannot be accepted how it was presented by this government through the accountability that they have been so held to all because of us on this side, I certainly look forward to seeing the Budget in its entirety.

A couple of things in the Budget, Mr. Speaker, and I find myself jumping around this Budget. There are a whole bunch of areas where this Budget leaves a good bit of stuff to be required. I would like to start off on wildlife, since this is my last address to the Budget, and the shortfalls that have clearly been brought forward.

First of all, I would like to talk about the cuts in personnel as it relates to the Wildlife Division. We see cut backs in conservation officers, Mr. Speaker, biologists, and a whole range of other resource people. In Corner Brook, this office was strained before this Budget came out in looking after the resources of our Province, which leads me to believe that this government has not placed the attention it should on our wildlife resources.

On the Northern Peninsula, we are seeing declines in the moose populations. Adjustments have been made through quotas, from some 1,250 quota cutbacks out of a total cut of 1,500, and no one seems to know the reason why this herd is declining. Yet, this government will cut back the people who are supposed to be there to

find out the resources. There is a safety factor; you have one conservation officer, Mr. Speaker, to look after the whole Northern Peninsula. That is like having one wildlife officer to look after the District of Torngat Mountains. It is not a small district, but it is the size of the Northern Peninsula.

I was very saddened to hear about the loss of a life in the Wildlife Division earlier this winter, Mr. Speaker. My hon. colleague from St. Barbe knew this gentleman. It raises a concern factor in terms of partnering when you are out on the land, something that I learned at a very young age. Certainly, you do not want to be travelling alone.

There are other issues around enforcement, Mr. Speaker, that sometimes cause risk to conservation officers. I have worked with them on many occasions over the last thirty years, and certainly can see the position in which they come from.

Mr. Speaker, I talked a little bit earlier about the reduction in certain wildlife species in quotas, like the moose, like the caribou. Caribou herds from the Torngat Mountains to the Southern Shore all have declined. With many of these herds there is no explanation why. When I see this government cut back on the number of resources that are already having trouble in trying to manage our wildlife resources before the cutbacks, it has doubled now since the staff positions have been eliminated. It certainly shows this government's commitment to our wildlife, or lack of it.

It concerns me as an Aboriginal person, as a hunter, as a fisherman, to look around this Province and see that our resources are declining. Along with this decline comes a decline in the resources that we put towards wildlife issues and conservation issues. It is very discomfoting, given that this Province is based on its outdoor harvesting, Mr. Speaker, from its cod fishery, to its moose, to all other species. It is part of our culture.

Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing more and more talk about Muskrat Falls. I heard the Member for

Lake Melville stand up last week and talk about his constituents, asking them to be patient. There is a situation up there now where there are still people looking for jobs, who live in the area and cannot get work. This project is deemed to last five years.

What I am hearing, Mr. Speaker, is contrary to the hon. member's words last week. They are afraid this is going to be a trend-setting situation where unions are not going to hire local and it will set a trend, as opposed to asking the people in Upper Lake Melville and Labrador to be patient. I think there are some eighty-one grievances gone forward now for inquiries, and Nalcor is mandated to address each and every one of these inquiries. Most of them are centred on the failure of people in Labrador to access employment.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk about being patient and we can talk about the jobs are coming, but if unions are not going to hire people, then a trend is for the life of the project. Then we will see the jobs start to diminish as the project nears its end.

I have heard reports that project managers are not able to progress with work at Muskrat Falls because of intervention by Nalcor. Once you have confusion on the work site, Mr. Speaker, you get into cost overruns. Cost overrun, number one, would be the North Spur situation at Muskrat Falls. Certainly this government has been covering up reports that we are gaining access to, and they are alarming. In many situations where bad news that this government has brought upon itself is not made public.

Mr. Speaker, these reasons are causing a lot of concern, at least from this side of the House, on the Budget. There are issues that are ongoing in the media as we speak relative to environment. We feel we should be asking our questions to the federal government because this government has everything else pawned off to the federal government. Search and rescue, Mr. Speaker, is certainly an issue that is still costing lives in our Province. A call for action and action are two different things.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the potential for disaster in the Fogo Island and Change Islands area with the sunken bulk carrier. This ship sank in our waters. It has the potential to affect our fish, it has the ability to disrupt our lives as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and it has the potential to cause irreversible damage to our shellfish populations. All we hear, Mr. Speaker, is this is a federal issue. Well the people in Change Islands and Fogo Island, and in Newfoundland and Labrador, are our people.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about the fact that this government and Nalcor say there will be no environmental impacts downstream from Muskrat Falls. We have already seen mercury levels rise in Lake Melville from the Upper Churchill project, Mr. Speaker. This is not a federal issue.

The question will come, I guess, from the hundreds of fishermen who put out the 14,000 fathoms of fishing gear in Lake Melville every summer. A lot of those people depend on that short summer fishery to get their fish for the season for their own consumption. This is not a commercial fishery. This is food that is consumed.

When I asked this in the House of Assembly this year, the hon. Minister of Environment and Conservation told me that when we reach that stage we will kick in health and welfare regulations. Mr. Speaker, a federal responsibility. I am somewhat confused, and this is why I am bringing these questions up because all I hear is this is a federal responsibility. I would like to see this government take action and step up on behalf of the people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I did not have a whole lot of time in Question Period to get the questions that I wanted out, so I will not ask a question but I will say the statement. I would like to talk a little bit about justice because that is one area where this government said it is probably not a good budget as it relates to justice. So they went forward to change it, Mr. Speaker.

Budget 2013 saw two court circuits cut in Nain, Labrador, along with everywhere else around the Province. In three communities in Northern Labrador the court circuit is not going to go in until they deem enough crime has been committed. This is not what I heard the minister say when he said Budget 2013 will be an improvement, Mr. Speaker.

The reason I say this, Mr. Speaker, is because there are violent crimes committed in Northern Labrador, as everywhere else in our Province. The only problem is, the crimes are not getting dealt with and these criminals are walking around next to the victims in small proximity, Mr. Speaker. That is not the justice that I heard was coming out in Budget 2013, but I do hope it is one of the areas that are going to be visited when justice is brought up again.

I heard the hon. Minister of Transportation and Works in his address to the Budget talk about the advice he got from a good family member, talking about protecting the victims of crime. That is your job. That is why we stick our hands up, I think, were the words that the hon. member used. When I look at the crime that is committed and the victim impacts in our Province, Mr. Speaker, I wish that the government across the way would take the advice that was given to the Minister of Transportation and Works. It certainly was advice that we could all follow.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the justice impacts and how it impacts Aboriginal victims, last year I tried to get the issue addressed with the officials of the Justice department. The short answer was: They would have no comment. If this is a caring government, as they say they are, I wonder is this the right response or did the minister make a mistake by saying that we cannot comment on this; that is a federal issue, Mr. Speaker.

We hear that continuously, Mr. Speaker. It bothers me when we cannot get our questions answered; we might as well defer them all to the federal government because I sometimes question the credibility of the government across the way.

Just a couple of other things, Mr. Speaker, both sides of government talk about the big improvements that are going to come to Upper Lake Melville. Government has talked about the number of jobs, I think somewhere in the vicinity of 3,500 jobs, and we are already starting to see the impact on infrastructure in Upper Lake Melville.

Mr. Speaker, the government across the way announced \$500,000 for an extension to the hospital for long-term care. Meanwhile, there are seventeen people taking up hospital beds at the Melville Hospital in Goose Bay, waiting to get into long-term care; \$500,000 is just enough to put a porch on the building, Mr. Speaker, when you add on the cost up in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, if you cannot fill long-term care beds, you have lineups in the hospital, and you have 3,500 extra people coming, if something does happen, and accidents always happen, where are these people going to go in the event of an accident? There is always a potential for accidents at major megaprojects around this Province.

Mr. Speaker, we are starting to see a crisis in housing in Upper Lake Melville, the same thing that happened in Lab West with the boom in –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. EDMUNDS: I think I can almost hear the hon. Member for Lake Melville. In an earlier address, I brought his concerns forward that he had tabled at the environmental assessment, Mr. Speaker. I did it for him. I welcome the member to thank me if he wants for bringing his concerns forward because he has not done it since he got there. I have been made quite aware of that in Lake Melville.

Before I take my place, I would just like to say I find it hard to support this Budget, Mr. Speaker, because there are so many changes evolving within the Budget after it has been delivered that I question the credibility of where it come from. I cannot see myself supporting this Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. EDMUNDS: I have not heard a lot of good things, Mr. Speaker, that came out. Certainly not every Budget is totally negative. The things that do come out that are good, we do appreciate them. We honestly do. Overall, it leaves a lot to be desired in this Budget. I sometimes find myself looking forward to actually seeing the Budget in its entirety after all the changes that have been made to the Budget since it came out earlier this year.

With that, I will take my seat and certainly look forward to any more comments on this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to get up and speak on Bill 1 in regard to our Budget. I listened intently to the hon. member across the way, and one of the things I picked up on when he was speaking. He said he was somewhat confused. Well, I will tell the hon. member he is actually totally confused because if he thinks the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want this Province to pick up the tab in regard to federal responsibility, I think he is going to be sadly mistaken.

We are a Province in this country. We entered Canada in 1949. We provided a lot to this place called Canada, and we will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker. We have significantly contributed to the country over the last number of years, especially over the last decade. I will say to him again he should get his priorities right.

As well I was listening to him in regard to his litany of things that he thought was wrong with the Budget. In regard to that, I would actually address that in this way as well. The hon. member must not understand the value of going

through a process of Budget. Sometimes you adjust yourself; you streamline your services, whatever it may be. Then that will affect people and you will have to do things differently and whatnot. That is called good fiscal management. That is called prudence, I say to the hon. member. We do that all the time. That is the reason why this government has been successful.

As well, in regard to our Budget, there is close to \$8 billion in this Budget being spent here in Newfoundland and Labrador, being spent in – I will adjust my tie for the hon. member across the way because he does not think I look good on TV. There is close to \$8 billion in this Budget being spent in here in Newfoundland and Labrador, being spent on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in regard to services.

The hon. member as well – and I never heard either one of them. I look around this House and I look at each and every one of the districts, forty-eight in total. I can name off here right now a bunch of projects in a bunch of districts, and just about each and every one of them have something in their district, be it in the City of St. John's, be it in Mount Pearl or be it in Torngat Mountains.

As a matter of fact I say to the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains that it is this government that actually has made more investment in Torngat Mountains in the last couple of years than any other previous government previous to us. We have potable water systems going into Rigolet, a potable water system going into Makkovik. We have a multi-purpose building going into Hopedale. We have an arena going into Makkovik.

Instead of going up there and trying to complain for the want of complaining – and that is fine enough to ask questions in regard to some of the items that we have addressed in this Budget, which we should because that is called good fiscal management. What he should do, too, is point out those important projects that are happening in his communities, Mr. Speaker, and projects right over this Province. Projects, like I said, in Rigolet, out in Salvage, and out in St. Jacques-Coomb's Cove or Jacques Fontaine – I

just cannot remember; I am just trying to remember the name of the places– in Victoria, and all these kinds of places, Deadman's Bay. Wherever it is, there are projects right across this Province. As a matter of fact, \$650 million worth of projects over the last five years, \$250 million of it under the present leadership of our Premier, Kathy Dunderdale, \$250 million of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Then when you add in the federal and municipal components, you are looking at over a billion dollars worth of investment in infrastructure.

Each one of the members across the way advocates on behalf of their districts, and they should be doing that, Mr. Speaker. When you listen to people talk about the Budget, they try to talk about everything negative. To me, that is actually a poor Opposition, Mr. Speaker, because an Opposition should not be just zeroing in on what they believe are negative things. They should be actually balancing it between what they perceive to be negative things, or streamlining services, to the actual benefits that are there for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There are a lot of benefits for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

You take my department, the Department of Municipal Affairs. Last year, we had \$130 million in municipal capital works last year alone. Cash flow on that this year, we are cash flowing probably about \$80 million worth of projects that will put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at work right across this Province with various construction firms in the far reaches of this Province, remote, urban, or wherever it may be. That is exactly what is going on in this Province because we support our municipalities, and we will continue to support our municipalities in this year's Budget.

Over the last couple of years we have been listening carefully, and that is the one thing we do as a government. The one thing we do that is really beneficial is that we listen to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We listen

to them, and then we act in regard to some of the things they put forward as ideas and things that we should be acting on as a government.

One of those things was the new Municipal Operating Grant. We listened carefully to MNL. We listened carefully to mayors and councillors in the various municipalities right across Newfoundland and Labrador. I meet with them on a regular basis, and sometimes three, four, five and six meetings a week.

As a matter of fact, at the symposium out in Gander this past weekend, I said we were really focused on a base-plus per capita formula for Municipal Operating Grants. Straight in through the government, that is the movement. Then we started talking about – because some of the things that were said by the President of MNL and the various members of MNL, the Mayor of Grand Falls-Windsor, it got me thinking that maybe we should be looking at something else.

Then we start doing another bit of research, and that is not a bad thing. You do not come up with a solution right off the bat. The Opposition and the Third Party over there figures that if you did a bit of consultation, if you did a bit of communication, if you did a bit of research, it is a bad thing. It is not a bad thing at all. It shows that we are an engaged government, engaged to the people of the Province, engaged to our municipalities, and engaged to their wants and needs.

That is the reason I started to consider the remote index factor that was first developed in Australia and then redeveloped, I guess, by the Newfoundland Statistics Agency here with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and then adding in the occupied dwellings and coming up with a formula that worked for small municipalities all across this Province. Then we added another \$6 million to the base budget for those particular communities after eliminating the seven communities with populations over eleven and giving a 38 per cent increase in their MOGs starting this January, 2014.

I do not see anybody on the Opposition or the NDP getting up and saying that was a good

thing. That is an absolutely good thing, which it was. It is being embraced, and a good many mayors and councillors have said that. As a matter of fact, I heard it clear out in the symposium out in Gander, absolutely clear, because I firmly believe, our Premier firmly believes, our government firmly believes that in order to have a healthy Province you first have to have healthy communities. That is the reason why we are investing in them.

We cannot do it all at once. There are two things. Number one is the Budget. You cannot promise everything and anything to everybody and give it to them today, give it to them within the week or whatever it may be. That just does not work, Mr. Speaker, because you have to be responsible. You have to be a responsible government. You have to plan, you have to strategize, and you have to flow it.

The other thing is the capacity of the industry, Mr. Speaker. There is only a certain capacity out there. If I were to be afforded a billion dollar budget tomorrow morning by the Premier, by Cabinet and by this government, well then we cannot spend it. We might be able to award it, but we cannot get the work done because there are only so many construction firms out there.

There are only so many people who do water and sewer work. There are only so many people who do paving. There are only so many people who build multi-purpose buildings, fire halls, and whatever it may be. We gear our Budgets to the capacity of the industry as well as the need of the Province. That is exactly what we do in a balanced approach, a responsible approach to governance.

I am proud of this government. I have been a part of this government for ten years. I reflect back on 2003 and compare it to 2010. I ask the hon. members to do the same. I ask the people of the Province to do the same. Just remember, because it is so easy to forget, exactly where we were in 2003.

Now look at it today and you will see people – I have never seen so many exotic cars driving around in the City of St. John's, driving around

in Mount Pearl, driving around in Gander, driving around wherever it may be. The reason is because they can afford them, Mr. Speaker. They have good paying jobs. They have good paying jobs and they are able to afford them, I say to the hon. member. That is the reason why they have them.

You do not see that when you have a bad economy. You see that when you have a robust economy, a strong economy. That is exactly what you see, Mr. Speaker. You will see many of them. You are not just seeing old fellows like me driving around in an exotic car. You are seeing young people doing the same, Mr. Speaker.

You are seeing young thirty year olds who have good, paying jobs, good positions, have good families, have good homes, and that is good. I am proud of that. I am proud to be part of this government that stimulated that economy. A lot of what I hear – and I said out at the symposium, when we look at the economy and we all talk about a red hot economy or white economy or whatever it may be, and we do have that. That did not happen by chance either. That absolutely did not happen by chance.

AN HON. MEMBER: They are all benefiting from it.

MR. O'BRIEN: They are all benefiting from it. Absolutely, I say to the hon. member.

There are other reasons as well. We just did not create jobs and person years of employment. We reduced taxes to put more money into their pockets, Mr. Speaker, that enabled them to spend more, I say to the hon. member. I say to the hon. member, we did that for you too, absolutely. Your take home pay is more today than it was five years ago, and you know that. You know that, absolutely.

We are putting money right back into the pockets of the people. I am sure when he walks into his insurance company he says I want to pay the tax on my auto insurance. I want to pay the tax on my home insurance. I am sure they say that, Mr. Speaker. No, they do not, because they

take it. Yes, absolutely, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, like them all, they deserve it. That is the kind of strategy we have had. Those are the things we have done as a government.

I heard the hon. member just before me talking about he is waiting for the Budget. Well, the Budget is down, I say to the hon. member. There was a great deal of work that went into that Budget to achieve what we have achieved, taking into account the global economy and the loss of oil revenues, both on the production side and on the price of a barrel of oil. That is the reason we find ourselves in a deficit position.

As well, Mr. Speaker, that did not daunt us. That did not daunt our Premier. That did not have our Premier making decisions just to be popular. That actually did not at all because we are a principled government. We are a government for the people of the Province and we will continue to be a government for the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: We have a \$2.9 billion investment in health care alone, Mr. Speaker. That is up significantly from when we took government in 2003. I am standing here as a Member for Gander and I can safely say that I probably have one of the most modern hospitals in Eastern Canada today when it comes to a facility. That was all done under this government.

As a matter of fact, the present Minister of Health has made significant investments in my hospital for me and the people in the region, in the James Paton Memorial Hospital. As a matter of fact, she was back twice last year making investments in equipment and whatnot. Then you listen to people here in this House talking about the doom and gloom, and everything else. It is unbelievable, actually, to tell you the truth, Mr. Speaker.

Listen, I understand. I have been at this a long time. I have been a part of the backrooms of government. I have been a party person and that kind of stuff. I have been a Member of the

House of Assembly as I said for ten years and I know the role of an Opposition, absolutely. As well, really what I have seen over the last ten years is an Opposition that is actually not doing the work they should be doing, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier, I noticed today, listed off a litany of very important meetings she has had right across Canada with various Premiers. She just got back from Houston and all that kind of good stuff, doing the important work for the people. There was not one question on that, absolutely nothing. As a matter of fact, I think this week there was not one question I got in regard to provincial responsibility, and all on federal responsibility, Mr. Speaker. The only things they have to latch their hands on are federal issues and trying to cloud the issue to provincial issues. That is not being a responsible Opposition.

As well, they have ignored, really, a \$1.3 billion investment in education, another cornerstone of this government, another cornerstone of our society. They like to forget the pupil-teacher ratio that we have in this Province. They like to forget the lowest tuition fees in the country. The reason why I have a niece and a nephew from New Brunswick here in this Province going to Memorial University –

AN HON. MEMBER: Why?

MR. O'BRIEN: The reason why is because this is the land of opportunity, I say to the hon. member. That is the reason why they are here, because of the land of the opportunity. They all want to be here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: As a matter of fact, I remember when they were children. They used to ask my wife Rhonda: Why did you move to Newfoundland and Labrador? How come you do not live in New Brunswick? This is the only place to live.

Guess what? Do you know where they want to live now? Do you know where my nephew and my niece want to live? Here in Newfoundland

and Labrador, because of the land of opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: That is right. I am telling you if you were listening to the members across the way my God, you would pack your bags and you are gone out of it. You would leave this great Province to someone else to come in and take over. All you talk about is doom and gloom, I say to the hon. members. That is absolutely the way it is, Mr. Speaker.

Here we are with \$42 million to help in regard to meeting demand for skilled labour. Then we have our big projects, our megaprojects, and Muskrat Falls. I heard the hon. Leader of the Third Party say today – and she was talking about energy requirements on the South Coast of Labrador. Last week she was totally against that.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who was it?

MR. O'BRIEN: Oh, that was the Leader of the Third Party. All of a sudden now she is asking for the requirement –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. O'BRIEN: She is wondering if we are going to have that, how we are going to address that issue. One week she is against Muskrat; the next week she is for Muskrat. It is all according to which way the wind is blowing, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: She never really knows.

MR. O'BRIEN: She never really knows exactly what they are doing. Then, she is on the Back Talk show talking about increasing taxes to the people of the Province, taking money right straight out of their pockets, when we have put \$536 million straight into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: The answer to everything in regard to what they want to do is tax the people, tax the people, tax the people, and tax the people. I gave a speech here in the House of Assembly last week and I showed the people of the Province, whoever is watching, the people in this Chamber, exactly what they do with the contracts with our oil companies. They tear them up, Mr. Speaker, tear them up, throw them away and then tax them, drive them right straight out of the country, drive them right straight out of the Province, drive them right straight out of the country, I say to the hon. members, absolutely. I did that last week. I just wanted to show exactly what would happen in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

We have made strategic investments over the years, investments in small business, investments in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I look at the Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development. He has been on his feet over the last couple of weeks, getting questions in the House, and highlighting the important investments that we have been making in this Province, especially in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, which is really the future of our Province.

That is all ignored, absolutely all ignored. I wanted to get on my feet here and just outline the significant investments that we have made as a government, and continue to make as a government. I go back to my own department, Mr. Speaker, and do not forget we support our fire departments, a \$1.7 million budget there for vehicles; I got close to \$500,000 in regard to equipment. We will continue to invest in our fire departments, in the important volunteer sector, and we will continue to invest in our ground search and rescue teams as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I will get on my feet and thank you for the opportunity, and hopefully I will be back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure to stand here this afternoon and talk to the Budget. It is always great to get an opportunity to stand up and talk about the positive things that are happening.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. MCGRATH: I hear comments from the other side and I would certainly like to take the opportunity to congratulate Yvonne Jones on being the new MP for Labrador. I have worked well with her in the past and look forward to working well with her into the future. Hopefully, she can live up to the expectations that are going to be there for her. I will be one of the ones who will be sure to keep her feet to fire. I can guarantee you that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Getting back to the Budget we are talking about today, and we will let the feds worry about the federal stuff, I want to talk about some of the good things that have been happening in our Budget. I heard the Minister of Finance comment several times that he has been up speaking about the Sustainability Plan. He made a recommendation – everybody in the House, on this side as well as the Opposition, but I know he did stress that the Opposition should certainly sit down and read the Sustainability Plan because we do have a plan.

If you read that Sustainability Plan, it will certainly give you an idea of where we came from in 2003-2004 when this government had to put their first Budget forward and where we are at today.

I would just like to review a little bit of where the Progressive Conservative Party, what they went into in 2003 when they took over

government and they had the task of putting together a Budget in 2004, and I was not here at the time but I am sure it was no easy task. Being in business in the Province I thought my God, that is not going to be an easy thing to do. Let's talk about some of the things that this government took over when they came into power and see where they were, what they had to deal with, and where they are at today.

You talk about a structural deficit; in 2003, when this government took over power in the Province, they had a deficit of \$12 billion. They went in a \$12 billion debt that they had to rebuild and they had to restart rebuilding a Province from nothing. The Province was facing bankruptcy and had to step in and they had to say: How are we going to rebuild it? I think that is what this government did. They had to reinvent social programs. Because when you are running a province, you have to take care of your social programs. We hear it all the time from the Third Party, from the Opposition, talking about social programs and what we are going to do about social programs. I am going to talk a little bit about what this government has done in the last nine years about social programs.

Also, how we worked out a strategy on paying down a debt. Those are things that we did. What we did is this government used a balanced approach. They took a balanced approach to bring down that debt. They took a balanced approach to work on the social programs and they took a balanced approach to rebuild the Province to where it is at today. As a member of this side of the government, I am very proud to say that we have rebuilt the Province. This Province is in very good hands right now.

We talked about improving services – and I know in my district, and I hear it from all other members talk about their districts, about the way the roads were and the condition that our roads were in, the conditions that our schools were in. I remember walking into a hospital in my district and the running joke in my district was if you walk into the hospital, before you go into outpatients make sure you have on a hard hat and safety glasses because you never know what

is going to fall off the wall; it might be a piece of gyproc.

This government looked at that and this government is in the process right now – we are very near completion of a \$90 million health facility in my district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: My district is one of the ones that seen the benefits of a fiscal government.

Right next door to that medical care facility we have a brand-new college, the College of the North Atlantic in Labrador West. That was another \$24 million project. This government saw we needed it and we wanted to move forward with that.

Let us talk a little bit about health care and where we were in 2000. You work on, again, talking about a Sustainability Plan. In 2000, the health care budget grew by 142 per cent. The health care project grew from \$1.2 billion to \$2.9 billion, a 142 per cent increase in the Budget for the health care. Our health care right now in the Province takes up 38.7 per cent of the spending in the Province. We certainly realize the importance of health care in the Province and we are investing 38.7 per cent of our Budget into our health care.

In spending in our education, we increased 71 per cent since we started in 2003. Seven hundred million dollars is where we started; right now we are at \$1.2 billion. We are making investments in places like Memorial University. You talk about investing in your future and investing in your youth; post-secondary education, to me, is where it is at. They are our future. I know I am going to be one of the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are going to be here, hopefully, in a ripe, old age depending on them to run the Province then. We realize that and we invest in our post-secondary education. Tuition fees are the lowest in the country right now.

Let us talk about some of the infrastructure investments we have made: \$154 million invested in 2003-2004 and we increased that to \$744 million in 2012-2013. We are investing in that, a 383 per cent increase that we are doing. These are some of the things we have made investments in. We realize we need to have a future. We have a solid plan. We have allocated resources, which address the infrastructure needs.

In 2003-2004, \$78 million on construction is what we spent in new buildings. In 2012-2013, over \$50 million were invested in our schools, health care, and government infrastructure. That is not talking about in maintenance. That is just talking about in new infrastructure.

You have heard the Minister of Education talk about some of the new schools that are being built right now, thirty-nine new projects, and that does not include ones we are improving on. You have municipal infrastructure. The speaker just before me – I will not get into the municipal infrastructure – talked about some of the major investments that this government has made in municipal infrastructure to a total of \$102 million. We have spent in the last nine years over \$5.1 billion in infrastructure.

Like I said I just wanted to touch on some of the parts of the Sustainability Plan. I urge every member in the House to sit down and read that plan, talk about the plan. It is self-explanatory and it is a great read. If you read it you will see where this government is going in the future, and you will realize that we do have a plan for the future. We know where we are going; we know what we are doing.

You hear the NDP, I have heard it, now getting up, every one of the members talking about the Budget. I have yet to hear them stand up and say one thing about their plan. I never heard one plan that they have. All I have heard is tax, tax, tax, and spend, spend, spend.

AN HON. MEMBER: Excuses.

MR. MCGRATH: I have not even heard an excuse. I have to be honest; I have not even

heard an excuse. I have seen some of the pieces of legislation that we are putting forward where they have tried to weasel in there and take some credit for it, but I have not seen one piece of a constructive plan yet. I have not seen anything where they can sustain the future of the Province except for their tax, tax, tax, and their spend, spend, spend.

I am glad I could get up and have a few words. Unfortunately, I am running out of time. I look forward to again speaking here in the House on the Budget, staying with this government, and moving forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): The hon. the Minister of Finance, if he speaks now he will close debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that I think all members of this House have in common is our desire to do that which is best for the great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Whether it be on the government side as PCs, whether it be the Liberals, or members of the New Democratic Party, I firmly believe that no one comes into this House simply based in self-interest or that they are going to gain for themselves.

What people look for, Mr. Speaker, or what we are trying to do, is ensure a viable and sustainable future for our Province, our children, and our grandchildren. What I have learned since 2007 has been quite startling in many ways, Mr. Speaker, as to the way politics works and the way that the House of Assembly works.

I can tell you that as a kid growing up in Carbonear, I had no interest in politics. I ended

up in university and ending up with a law degree. I had no interest in politics. In fact, as a lawyer I felt that doing what I did, I had to be independent of political affiliations and allow me to do that which I firmly believed in, Mr. Speaker, as a criminal lawyer.

By doing that, oftentimes we had to make tough decisions. When you are sitting there as a lawyer making a decision as to whether or not your client will testify in a murder trial, there is a lot of stress comes with that and decisions have to be made. Then you have the twelve members of the jury who will make a decision on, essentially, a person's life. These people do the best they can with what they are given. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, they most often make the right decisions. If they do not, it is because of the way the evidence is put before them or it is a mistake made in terms of law.

What we deal with in politics, Mr. Speaker, is a bigger jury. It is a jury that comprises all people of this Province. Politics is something that is very near and dear to the hearts of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. So I have been somewhat surprised at times by what I can describe as the vitriolic nature of the attacks that take place on politicians.

Now, I have to say, I have been very disappointed in the last period of time in the personal attacks that have been made towards our Premier, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest to you that if we all accept that we are here to do the best we can, than we can be criticized without falling to the level to which things have deteriorated.

What I say to the critics out there, what I say to the opponents, if you do not like what we doing, if you do not like what members of the NDP or the Liberals are doing, then run for office. The best place to change things, whether it be through legislation or policy, is in here. Mr. Speaker, we all live with the view that the public is right.

One of the biggest surprises for me – again, my colleagues who are lawyers may or may not agree with this. It took me a long time to learn

logic, to learn that there is a logical approach to the law and that you have to ground yourself in that logic. We are now in an arena, Mr. Speaker, where oftentimes emotion governs as opposed to logic.

There has been an emotional, at times visceral reaction to Budget 2013. I am looking forward today to taking a few minutes to explain our reasoning for this Budget. Why we are doing what we can, not that there are conspiracies at play. We are making decisions, Mr. Speaker, that we feel are in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As I have said on a number of occasions, and the members of this House have said, sometimes on our side the easiest thing to do is to do nothing, is to carry on. Leave the mess for someone else to clean up. Oftentimes, Mr. Speaker, to do that which is right, or which we feel is right, is not politically popular.

What we did in this Budget, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, what the Premier did in this Budget, as I have said on a number of occasions, shows great fortitude and a vision for the future. Because what the Premier is saying to the people of this Province: I am willing to withstand the scrutiny, I am willing to withstand the criticism, because at the end of the day what I am doing and what my government is doing is what is best for the people of our Province to ensure a viable and sustainable future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Now, we have been called everything from pickpockets – that is one of the nicer terms, actually – to having photographs nailed on poles, to Facebook pages, Mr. Speaker. Again, our belief, or the beliefs of – the way democracy works is the people have that right.

So, what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is not catering to what people want us to do simply for subjective political gain. We are doing what we can to stem a potential problem, stop it right now, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our spending is under control and that we will provide to our

children and grandchildren. Not necessarily a debt-free Province, that is going to take time, but a Province, Mr. Speaker, that does not see twenty-three cents of every dollar going to interest payments, as it did when we took office in 2003.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: We have been criticized, Mr. Speaker, for wasting money and for fiscal mismanagement. What have done with our money? I say to the people opposite, and I say to the members here, I will not, and we will not apologize for building schools, hospitals, roads, recreation facilities throughout this Province, including in the member's opposite districts.

What have we done since 2004? We have reduced debt by 25 per cent, and that means money. That means money saved, because we still pay \$800 million a year in debt servicing costs. Bonds, Mr. Speaker, which go back to 1990 and which have interest rates of 10 per cent, 11 per cent, and 12 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated a few minutes ago, we have increased our health care spending by 142 per cent. We have increased our education spending by 71 per cent. We have increased our infrastructure spending by 383 per cent. Is that wasting money? Is that what the people of this Province will call wasting money, or is that investing in necessary infrastructure to ensure that we get to where we are today with a vibrant economy and one that will allow for future growth in this Province?

Now, in Labrador alone we have spent \$4 billion, including \$384 million on the Trans-Labrador Highway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: We have spent 60 per cent, almost 67 per cent – I think I heard someone say 57 per cent in the social sector. We have \$149 million Poverty Reduction Strategy. We have reduced taxes for those in lower incomes. We have numerous programs for seniors, Mr. Speaker, too numerous actually to outline in

such a short period of time, and we have reduced taxes by \$500 million.

Now that is a record, Mr. Speaker, we can stand on as a government. That is a record that speaks to how we have used our resource revenues. How those resource revenues have fuelled our economy and allowed us to build it to the point where it is today.

We heard the Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development speak last night about the investments in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Now, we then find ourselves in a situation, the good times are rolling and we are building hospitals. I think it was the Minister of Education who keeps telling me thirty-nine schools; long-term care facilities in St. John's, Corner Brook, Labrador West, Lewisporte, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and Carbonear.

New hospitals are going up, Mr. Speaker. A new Waterford hospital is being built, a new hospital in Lab West. A new hospital is going to be built in Corner Brook, which the Members for Humber West and Humber East certainly want.

We are building new schools, as I have talked about. Look at the roads that we have being built in this Province, Mr. Speaker, recreation facilities, and new stadiums. So that is how we spent the money. All of a sudden we find there is less money, and there are a number of reasons for that.

In 2003-2004, our Province received 36 per cent of its revenues from equalization, from the federal government. We were dependent on the federal government for our very existence. It was up to them to determine if we were going to get money. Now what way is that to go to a federal government with your hand held out as we had done for the last fifty years since we entered Confederation, saying: Please help us, we need help. How much equalization do we receive today? None. Mr. Speaker, we determine our own way.

Being a have Province simply means that we pay our own way, that we make our own

decisions, that we take pride in the fact that we are no longer Canada's poor cousin, that we stand now proud and strong in this federation, that we say to the rest of this country: Look at how far we have come.

Is that what it means to being a have Province: having pride in yourself, being proud of the way you conduct yourselves, being proud of how far we have come, being proud of the education that our people have received, being proud that our people can stand on any stage in this country, Mr. Speaker, whether it be politics, law, education, theatre or the arts, because that is what we can do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: It does not give us money.

Then, we lost the Atlantic Accord money, which has been a significant source of revenue; the last payment of \$536 million in 2012. We have decreased taxes by \$500 million. That is \$500 million we do not have to spend this year or last year, Mr. Speaker. What did we do with it? We put it in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to allow for a better quality of life for them to recognize that they have needs and the more money they have in their pockets, the better it is for them and their families.

We have increased wages by \$500 million, Mr. Speaker. As a reward to the people who work in the public service, as a thank you and as a recognition that they have not received the monies in the previous years.

Then, we get a decrease in oil production. Our oil production goes from 97 million barrels a year down to 76 million or 77 million barrels. You add all of that together, Mr. Speaker, and we have a situation where, as a government we have to make a choice. That choice is simple. Do nothing and let it carry on where it becomes someone else's problem, or to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing with it as a government, and what this Premier is doing, is dealing with the problem or the situation before it gets out of hand. Who would have ever

thought a number of years ago we would see the global economic situation that is currently going on in Europe, what is taking place in the United States? Who would have ever thought that as a Province we could be so dependent on what is taking place in China with the price of oil and the price of iron ore, Mr. Speaker?

We cannot simply say this will not happen to us. Those types of insular and parochial attitudes, Mr. Speaker, have no place in today's global economy. Because we live on an Island we are not protected from what takes place in the rest of the world, so what we have to do is plan for the future.

As the previous Minister of Finance said we have been doing that for a long time. We have been spending to build the economy, but what we are doing now is planning for the future. We are planning for the future so that my children, our grandchildren, the Pages here in the House of Assembly, that they have a bright future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: How are we doing that? By having the lowest tuition fees in the country, Mr. Speaker.

Look at the residences that people can move into over at Memorial and in Corner Brook, Mr. Speaker. Look at the debt reduction forgiveness that we have brought in. It is any wonder that Memorial University is now the biggest university in Atlantic Canada? With a government that is concentrating on education and bringing in these kinds of policies, it is no wonder at all, Mr. Speaker – wouldn't you want to come here too if you lived in Nova Scotia, come to the beautiful Province of Newfoundland and Labrador? That is what we are doing as a government.

So we then look at a situation where our deficit is growing to the point where it could be \$1.6 billion. The volatility of our economy is so significant, Mr. Speaker. When I meet with the banks and I meet with the bond rating agencies they all talk about that. We recognize that we cannot control the price of oil because that is

dependent on so many geopolitical factors as to what takes place in the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia. Then you have the question of what takes place in Iran and Iraq. A war in Iran takes 2.5 million barrels a day off the market. Then we have the shale oil that is taking place in the United States.

We can only control the price to an extent. We meet with experts and we budget based on the price they give us. What did we do this year? What was our plan? We took six or seven different projections. We averaged them out, Mr. Speaker. We hired Dr. Locke and we came up with a figure. Whether that figure will be right or wrong time will tell, but it is a prudent, conservative figure that allows for budgeting purposes.

Then when we get to the production, we have been way off, up to 18.5 million barrels off between January and June in terms of the numbers received from the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. We are trying to improve the accuracy and the timing of that information, Mr. Speaker.

My officials, the Department of Finance officials, this year poked back, for lack of a better term, at the C-NLOPB and lo and behold there are 8 million barrels of oil. A week before the Budget, the Chair and the new Vice-Chair of the C-NLOPB came in and said: Oh, by the way there is another million barrels at Terra Nova. It is welcome news, Mr. Speaker, but we are not out of the woods; we are still looking at a \$563 million deficit this year and we are looking at a deficit the following year.

What do we do this year, Mr. Speaker? By engaging in the core mandate analysis and by looking at our departments from top to bottom, we had to make some tough choices, and they are tough choices. Any time there are layoffs or a reduction in programs of any sort, those are tough choices. What we have heard from our members here today is that we focused on education and on health. What we are looking at is we are listening to the people of the Province

during the pre-Budget consultations. That is what they told us.

Then the other big problem we have that we have to deal with is that of the unfunded pension liability, which is currently up to 70 per cent of our net debt, despite making \$3.3 billion in payments since 2006. So we are hoping to work with the unions. I am going to invite the unions in shortly, actually, to outline some of the information we have gathered in the last couple of months and see if we can work to protect their pensions and to protect, also, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers of our Province.

Mr. Speaker, this deficit has to be wrestled under control and we have to continue to focus on paying down our debt. We have heard of the good things, the focusing on families, the focusing on education, the focusing on communities we have heard in the Budget. There has been as I said such an emotional response to the Budget, a lot of times the good things are lost there.

What about the money for the Green Bay Health Centre? What about the money for the Coley's Point school? What about the money for the hospital in Corner Brook? What about the money for the clinic in Glovertown? What about all of that money that is going out to the people of this Province, Mr. Speaker?

What about \$8.5 million for the continuation of a new adult addictions centre in Harbour Grace, the opening up of the youth addictions centre in Grand Falls-Windsor, the opening up of the youth mental health facility in Paradise, and money for the planning of a new Waterford Hospital? Does this sound to the people of this Province like a government that is ignoring those who need help, those who are vulnerable? This is a reaction, Mr. Speaker, to societal difficulties and issues.

What we are saying to people, we will provide help, but to provide help costs money. As the Minister of Health so rightfully pointed out yesterday – and I really do think it is a legitimate question to say to the Liberals, to say to the NDP especially: What is your plan? What would you

do? It is easy to criticize, be part of the solution. Offer us ideas that can help us through this. By doing that it is not enough to simply say bring in universal day care, universal home care. Mr. Speaker, these are all ideas espoused by the NDP, especially which no one necessarily disagrees with. What about the money? As the Member for Mount Pearl South talks, we do not have that proverbial money tree.

Our non-renewable resources will run out, Mr. Speaker, although we are good as it now stands to 2040, and there will be more oil found. What do we do as a government? We look to the future; we develop Muskrat Falls that transition from a non-renewable resource economy to a renewable resource economy, and to allow for sources of income for future generations, but also answers that most basic question. We have to satisfy our own power needs. That is what Muskrat Falls does, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully some day we will get to the development of Gull Island.

Now, Mr. Speaker, where are we today in terms of our economy? We have the lowest tuition fees in the country, as I have said. We have the most competitive tax regime in Atlantic Canada. We are second in the country in weekly earnings. We have more people working today than ever before in our history. Since 2003, the unemployment rate has declined by 3.9 percentage points, the most in thirty-seven years. Capital investment has increased by 170 per cent.

Has this all happened by accident, Mr. Speaker? No. This happens through good planning, through investment, through encouraging people to come to our Province. By using our resources wisely, Mr. Speaker, so that what we are doing is paying for all of these programs.

I know there are complaints at times, but, Mr. Speaker, when I began today I talked about all of us wanting to do that which is in the best interest of the people of our Province. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the Premier firmly believes, and I firmly believe, that as our Cabinet and caucus firmly believes that by sacrificing today to ensure for a bright and

sustainable future for children and grandchildren, that is the right thing to do. It is the principle thing to do and that is why we are doing it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this House approve the general budgetary policy of the government.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called, please summon the members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

CLERK: Ms Dunderdale, Mr. King, Mr. Hutchings, Ms Shea, Mr. Davis, Ms Sullivan, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Verge, Mr. Littlejohn, Mr. Granter, Mr. Cornect, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Dalley, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Kent, Mr. Lane, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Brazil, Ms Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Little, Mr. Cross, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Peach, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Russell.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please stand.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Edmunds, Ms Michael,

Mr. Kirby, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Rogers, Mr. Osborne.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, the ayes thirty-two, the nays eleven.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion passed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENNEDY: Mr. Speaker, I have received a message from –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENNEDY: Mr. Speaker, I have received a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

MR. SPEAKER: All rise.

As Administrator of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit Estimates of sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending 31 March 2014, by way of further Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867, I recommend these Estimates to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: _____
J. Derek Green, Administrator

Please be seated.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that the message be referred to a Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply and that I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay’.

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Verge): Order, please!

The Committee will be considering the resolution and Supply bill.

Resolution

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2014 the sum of \$4,467,528,900.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, “An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2014 And For

Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service”. (Bill 2)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the schedule carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2014 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2014 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution and Bill 2 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed a resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$4,467,528,900 for the 2013-2014 fiscal year be carried, and I further move that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto, and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$4,467,528,900 for the 2013-2014 fiscal year be carried, and that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto, and ask leave to sit again.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte.

MR. VERGE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred, and have directed me to report that they have passed the amount of \$4,467,528,900 contained in the Estimates of Supply for the

2013-2014 fiscal year and have adopted a certain resolution and recommended that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution, and recommended that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

AN HON. MEMBER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, President of Treasury Board that the resolution be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now a first time.

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'.

Motion carried.

CLERK: "That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2014 the sum of \$4,467,528,900."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

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'.

Motion carried.

CLERK: The second reading of the resolution.

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for leave to introduce Bill 2, and I further move that the said bill be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2014 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service, Bill 2, the Supply bill, and that the said bill be now read the first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board shall have leave to introduce the Supply

bill, Bill 2, and that the said bill be read a first time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2014 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service", carried. (Bill 2)

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2014 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 2)

On motion, Bill 2 read a first time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Supply bill be now read the second time.

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

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'.

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2014 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 2)

On motion, Bill 2 read a second time.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Supply bill be now read the third time.

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

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'.

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2014 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 2)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2014 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service", read a third, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 2)

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider item two on the Orders of the Day which would be, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3, Bill 7.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole and that I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Committee of the Whole will be considering Bill 7.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3". (Bill 7)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I still want to bring up a few points as it relates to this bill. We had one opportunity to speak to this yesterday. We heard a lot of discussion on this yesterday.

Some of the comments I heard, I guess it was from different members, was about how this was – again, we kept referring to the \$50 fee. I do not know if it was ever acknowledged, it is actually more likely to be \$100 because we are dealing with two people who usually purchase or sell a home, if we are dealing with matrimonial couples. I do not know if that was factored into the actual transactions or not. I would be interested in finding that out.

There was a lot of commentary as it related to the \$500,000 home in the Avalon, but I have some disagreement with it, just looking at it from that perspective because it is not that way everywhere else. I am just wondering, when we talk about the rationale for doing this, was the rationale to have pay for services that were previously provided for free, to actually put a fee on that, or was it to come up with some money in a time where we do have a deficit?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, the member is correct. It is \$50 per transaction. If there is a couple purchasing a home it could be \$100 for a transaction. If it is a corporation then there would be one transaction, which will be \$50. So it is \$50.

In relation to the second point, I outlined this yesterday. In our core mandate review or in our review of services being provided, all departments went deep into everything in the departments. When we came to this one we found we are providing a service to the people or to a limited number of people of the Province and they are getting that service for free, whereas we have a situation where there are people employed and people have to be paid. So we looked at what they are charging in other provinces. We looked at comparable fees in this Province. So, no, it was not simply a cost recovery.

We felt that a reasonable fee would be \$50. We did not look at using the excess revenues that it would cure the issue of the deficit but it is certainly an amount of money. It was more

based on what would a fair fee be here comparing it to fees charged in similar transactions in our Province and in other provinces.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I just wonder if the minister has at his disposal, if it is being done in the other provinces, do you have a chart on the different costs? I am sure it probably ranges from less than that to probably more than what we charge. I would be interested in hearing the range as we go from this Province across.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are three jurisdictions that I can make reference to including New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. The fees do range, as pointed out by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile. The range goes from \$20 to \$114.33 per request. They are for selected tax types, whereas our fee will cover all taxes administered by the Province.

It seems to me that in other provinces the fees could vary, you could pay more than one transaction fee. In our Province we have the Judgment Enforcement Registry is a \$60 staff search or \$35 remote search. At the Personal Property Registry there is a \$10 per search, and in the Labour Relations Agency is a proposed \$50 search.

We looked at what was taking place in other provinces and what was taking place within our own jurisdiction and felt based on that – and having regard to the time that would go into it and the fact that we could turn this around in forty-eight hours – then a \$50 fee per transaction would be fair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I am looking at the application for a tax clearance certificate right now. It is a standard form. It has been revised a number of times over the years. Basically, every law firm, Mr. Chair, when the transaction is happening, the legal assistant fills it out and sends it in.

I know the minister referred to forty-eight hours, but I am just wondering if that is actually happening or not? The real estate assistants who I am talking to are saying that they are having significant difficulty getting them so that we can actually close on time. In many cases we are not getting the written back. We have to get verbals back so we can close the deal on time.

I wonder about that because it is a pretty standard form, and I do not think there is any additional information. Now I guess the only additional process is the actual financial transaction that takes place too. They have to go online, probably go into the Web portal of some sort within government, you insert your credit card information, and go through that. I understand there is a series of e-mails back and forth.

I know there is another level added but I am wondering if there is any indication – and I know we are going to the lowest levels, right on the ground, and probably below the minister's dealings with this. I am just wondering of the level of satisfaction right now. This is what I am hearing from the real estate people who are dealing with this on a day-to-day basis.

Not that this did not happen before, but I do not think with the imposition of – we have heard raising the fee. It is not raising the fee. It is instituting or creation of a new fee. It was never there before. I am just wondering, we are paying for something now, if that will improve the service or will the service remain the same?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I indicated yesterday, a letter was written to the Law Society, I think on the date that the – it might have been the Budget or shortly thereafter, indicating that the fees would start April 1. At that point it was outlined that the fee would be \$50 per transaction.

As I have indicated, officials have told me they strive to provide these certificates within forty-eight hours. If the Law Society has concerns that this is not being complied with, they can certainly get back to us and I will check into that.

We do have now in these circumstances where there is a fee and there will be revenues raised, an ability to strive even further to make sure that the time frames are reasonable and that they are met with. Because as I talked about last night, the last thing we want is a situation where you have a couple, a person, wanting to move into a house and it does not take place because of the hold up of the certificate. We certainly do not want that to happen.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I raise that point and I guess I just wanted to speak a bit more about it because we heard a number of comments about this yesterday. One of the comments by a member on the opposite side was that, and I guess the general gist of what many of the members said: Well, who is going to mind paying \$50 to get peace of mind? Who is going to mind that? That is a fair statement to make.

The problem is that you got that peace of mind before for free. I just put that out. You always had to get a clearance certificate in order to move a transaction forward, whether you are the vendor – because if I am purchasing a home from these two people, I do not want to be going out and taking ownership of this home and they have tax issues.

The fact is the vast, vast majority of the time you never get a hit on a clearance certificate because

we are dealing with things like horse racing tax, mining and minerals, insurance companies. Usually the ones you get hit on are student loans or you get hit on sheriff certificates or things like that. Like if people have been sued and they have a judgement against them. I will just come back off that for a second.

We are talking about the fee which is put in place. That is fine if we are saying: look, we are going to start charging people for this service. Everybody else pays for it so they should pay here. Now I do not know if that is the case. I actually do not know if they pay. I know the minister referenced three provinces. I do not know what it is across the board exactly. It would be interesting to find that out.

I am just wondering now: so the same amount of work that is taking place now, that took place before when it comes to getting a clearance certificate, the legal system sends off the requisition form, the people in Finance go through it, check it all off, and send it back after a period of time. All we are doing is adding a financial component to that.

I just would be interested in clarification as to do we have any more individuals, or are there any new positions created to do this faster now that there is about \$1.5 million coming in to have this; or the second part, were there any jobs created in the financial section to deal with the new fees coming in? We have about \$1.5 million a year coming in. We have about 30,000 financial transactions. That is 30,000 new transactions that did not take place before. Do we have the same amount of staff covering that off, or are we going to have to put new people in to take care of that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is my understanding that the figure of 30,000 is based upon what we have seen over previous years. I think I indicated last night that the figure could go up or down depending on the number of real estate transactions that take place.

I have no indication that there is a problem with the provision of services. There is certainly no new staff created, or no positions created. If there is an indication, if the Law Society or lawyers indicate that at some point there is a problem with their services, then we will certainly look at that. That is a commitment that we could make that would make sense.

Other than that, Mr. Chair, there is no indication at this point, I can say to the member opposite, that is a difficulty here with providing these certificates. The fact that we are charging a fee is based on the fact that this is something that a fee should be charged for.

CHAIR: The Member for St. John's North.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yesterday, when we were discussing this legislation in the previous phase of this, we were talking about – I think the Member for Mount Pearl South was talking about how there were no fees before so we can charge a fee and it is not going to impact anyone, that people are going to be buying homes and this is not going to deter them in any way and so on and so forth.

One assumes that government's plan is to raise this new revenue by charging this fee because it wants to raise a certain amount of money. Prior to sitting yesterday, it was my understanding that it was somewhere in the range of \$1.4 million. As we got into the debate yesterday evening, and I do not have the Hansard, but I thought one of the members opposite was talking about raising \$2 million to \$3 million from this. That is quite a bit more than what I had assumed the intention was.

I know this \$1.4 million figure is a projection, so is there an upper and a lower bound that the Department of Finance is working with in terms of how much money is projected to be raised from this new fee; or was that member referring to something other than this particular fee?

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is simply based on the fact there could be 30,000 transactions. At \$50 a transaction, that is where the money would be raised. We certainly did not look at any upper or lower limits. The bottom line here is this was a service that was provided for free that we felt there should be a reasonable fee attached to it, and that is what we did.

There are no upper or lower limits. It depends on the number of transactions that obviously take place, the number of real estate transactions and other types of transactions that take place. All you can do going into a particular year is estimate that number. They could be up; they could be down.

So, no, there is no upper or lower figure. The \$1.5 million is the figure that has been used.

CHAIR: The Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance, based on these tax clearance certificates. He had referenced just three provinces: New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. That would lead me to think that British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Quebec, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and the Territories would not be charging any type of fee for tax clearance certificates, as the federal government does not charge a fee.

When the minister made his statement with these three provinces, he said the fees range from \$20 to \$114, but that was a combination of various taxes that would be searched, upwards of \$114. With it he had also talked about the PPSRs and the Labour Relations Agency search we have here in the Province, which would amount up to \$95 already on top of a \$50 fee.

When he responded to the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, he had said that three provinces had these fees of \$20 to \$114. Is he including all of

the comprehensive fees, such as the Labour Relations Agency, the PPSRs, and registering these surcharges that we already have here in Newfoundland and Labrador? I would just like that clarification, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly cannot control the way the member opposite thinks, nor would I want to, but the issue here in terms of what takes place in other Provinces, well I can tell him that there are three provinces that we have looked at where there are clearance certificates and charges. I have outlined that those provinces are New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. Then I gave examples of three searches that take place in our Province.

When it comes to looking at the imposition of a \$50 fee, Mr. Chair, it is not something that you need to know exactly what they are doing in every Province. If we are providing a service, a service that costs government money, a service which in other types of similar searches they pay for, we felt that a \$50 fee is reasonable, and there is really no more to it than that. It is a \$50 fee; it is reasonable.

Now, the one thing I will say, of course, what we could have done is done what the NDP in Nova Scotia and Manitoba did and raise HST that affects everyone, especially the poor and the vulnerable. We chose not to do that; we raised a \$50 fee here on a transaction.

CHAIR: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

I would just like to ask the minister to explain a bit more. Three provinces have it, the federal government does not, and six provinces do not. Number one, how did you come upon this one to charge a fee for? You indicated that it is something that should have a fee attached to it. How do you determine what should have a fee attached to it and what does not have a fee

attached to it? Why did you choose this one, especially since there were no problems with the system you have indicated? With no problems with the system, how did you come upon it? That is what I am finding very curious, based on your fact of well, it is something that should be fee'd.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think I have already answered that question a number of times. When this review of all departments commenced, officials were tasked with looking at everything that was going on in their department. You look at fees that were charged, we did look at the potential to raise income tax, we looked at the potential to raise HST, and we looked at all of the numbers. A couple that has been here the last few days we have spent a significant debate on were the elimination of the Labrador Border Zone Tax Rebate, which from our perspective was one that could easily be eliminated. In this particular case, it is a certificate which is paid for in all kinds of other transactions, Mr. Chair.

Yesterday I think I referenced the fact of if you want a tax certificate from municipalities, you pay for it. If you want certain types of certificates, sheriff's searches, registry searches, you pay for those kinds of things in a transaction. So this happened to be one that escaped under the radar, but the review resulted in it being highlighted. It was a very simple decision to impose a fee on a transaction like this where other similar searches result in transactions. It costs the government money and we are providing a service. There is no great magic other than \$50 was felt to be a reasonable fee because that is the proposed fee for the Labour Relations Agency clearance certificates.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is my understanding that these tax clearance certificates do a search on retail sales tax, health, post-secondary and education tax, gasoline tax, tobacco tax, insurance company, school tax, mining tax, financial corporation tax, and that is what is listed on a certificate there.

My question would be, I guess, this type of clearance system is a means to help facilitate transactions and with it government would be informed of outstanding tax amounts that are owed for transactions, the lien would kick in. Is there an amount which the Department of Finance has in terms of liens on specific taxes and how successful these tax clearance certificates are in collecting?

What is the process the department would follow when they do a tax clearance certificate and they see that there are balances outstanding, what type of mechanism would they put into play to help facilitate payment back to the provincial Treasury? Is there a payment plan worked out? Do they request that they garnish a percentage of the transaction or does this automatically come upfront on completion of the sale, or does the sale not go through or is there a combination of circumstances? I ask the minister if he could explain that, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee, rise report progress and ask leave to sit again.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte.

MR. VERGE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted.
Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Tomorrow being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, this House now stands adjourned until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.