



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVII

FOURTH SESSION

Number 1

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

Tuesday

April 21, 2015

The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Please be seated.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mr. Speaker, the Justices of the Supreme Court have arrived.

MR. SPEAKER: Admit the Justices of the Supreme Court.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has arrived.

MR. SPEAKER: Admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

[Mr. Speaker leaves the Chair].

[His Honour the Lieutenant Governor takes the Chair].

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that all present be seated.

HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (Frank F. Fagan, CM, ONL, MBA):

Honour 100, Our History and Our Culture

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

One hundred years ago, marching proudly in their blue puttees towards ships that would ferry them to a war-torn Europe, young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians could not imagine what awaited them or what would be asked of them. A century later, we honour the far too many whose young lives were cut brutally short and the many more whose bodies and memories were scarred by what they endured. Through the “Honour 100 – First World War Commemorations”, we are telling the story of our men and women who served in the Royal Naval Reserve, Newfoundland Regiment, Newfoundland Forestry Corps, and

Volunteer Aid Detachment, as well as those who support the war effort at home. We will soon mark the centennial of the Regiment’s landing at Gallipoli, Turkey on September 19. The Honour 100 initiative will include opportunities for our students and veterans to participate in the annual Trail of the Caribou pilgrimage with the Royal Canadian Legion. This year, a new Ambassador Program will provide opportunities for more youth to commemorate Newfoundland and Labrador’s role in the First World War by visiting the memorials at Beaumont-Hamel and other solemn sites where the remains of our loved ones rest. Like others before them, they will return with fresh perspectives and stories that all of us need to hear – stories to remind us of the unbearable sadness of war and the debt we owe to those who served. As students throughout our Province hear those stories, they will also benefit from curriculum enhancements that tell about the people whose sacrifices we honour.

Our government has also celebrated the contributions of the women and men who served in this war and other conflicts by naming the new provincial ferries that will service Bell Island, Fogo Island, and Change Islands the *MV Legionnaire* and the *MV Veteran*.

In recent decades, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have served on battlefields from Sarajevo to Kandahar. Although those devastated frontiers were far removed from the shores of Green Bay, it was there in her quiet Springdale home that Gladys Osmond started handwriting letters to the troops, one by one. She organized a Granny Brigade of like-minded seniors, eager to spread some downhome cheer, well-wishes and prayers with soldiers who were serving in harm’s way. Time and again, the soldiers wrote back to say how touched they were that she would reach out to lift their spirits. Gladys passed away in January at the age of 91; but before passing away, she was presented with the Canadian Forces Medallion for Distinguished Service, granted an honorary Doctorate of Laws degree by Memorial University and inducted into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, we honour Gladys Osmond and the Granny Brigade for exemplifying the very best qualities of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and for reminding us to keep in our hearts the women

and men who serve to protect us at home and abroad.

Despite the distances and differences that separate us, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians stand by one another in hard times and good times alike. In the history of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are thousands of people like Gladys whose stories need to be shared. Whether in “Them Days” magazine or on CBC’s “Land & Sea”, in novels or history books, in folklore research or songs or films, these stories must be gathered and disseminated among our young people to show them who they are and from whence they’ve come. In towns from Glenwood to Nain, from Natuashish to Port au Port, from Conne River to Northwest River, we encourage people to capture and chronicle the tales of folk heroes that more of us really ought to know. To showcase the richness of our diverse Inuit, Innu and Mi’kmaq heritage, our government is now preparing the terms of reference for an Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee to enhance school curriculum so it will continue to reflect this heritage to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Our government will also continue to consult with Aboriginal organizations, including when development decisions have the potential to impact asserted rights. We will continue to implement the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, continue to negotiate the Innu Nation’s final land claims and self-government agreement and the Miawpukek First Nation final self-government agreement, continue to participate in the Innu Roundtable, continue to develop a land claims and self-government agreement Implementation Policy, and continue to ensure that Aboriginal people benefit fully and fairly from major developments like the Muskrat Falls.

Across the vast stretches of the Big Land, the camaraderie that unites people of diverse communities is an inspiration for all of us. Guided by the Northern Strategic Plan and other investments targeting Labrador, by the end of the 2014-15 fiscal year our government allocated a total of \$4.9 billion in Labrador since 2004, and opened up the region as never before with the Trans-Labrador Highway. We will consult with northern stakeholders to develop a new Northern Strategic Plan to raise new

opportunities on the foundation we have already built. In 2016, we will once again support Labradorians who gather for the Labrador Winter Games, a triennial celebration of sports as diverse as the Snowshoe Race, the Snowmobile Race, the Dog Team Race, the Labrathon, the One Foot High Kick, and Over the Rope. In recognition of the uniqueness of Labrador and the love Labradorians share for their flag, our government will proudly fly the Labrador Flag at our Labrador-Quebec border crossings.

Our multifaceted heritage not only enriches us as a people, but it also forms the backbone of our billion-dollar tourism industry in which thousands of people are finding employment and opportunity in more than 2,500 enterprises, 83 per cent of which are small businesses. Our government has invested directly in businesses and infrastructure to help strengthen our tourism industry. It has invested in marina developments, boardwalks, trail ways, airport improvements, the St. John’s Convention Centre, and various enterprises, all with the goal of strengthening Newfoundland and Labrador’s image as a destination for leisure and for business travellers. By continuing to invest in our award-winning, trendsetting marketing campaign, we will showcase Newfoundland and Labrador to the rest of the world with a goal of further developing this essential industry. Our government will continue to support growth through our Cultural Economic Development Program, the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, our community museums, heritage organizations, archives, and Provincial Historic Sites. The just-concluded *Republic of Doyle* series complemented our marketing ads by showcasing our uniqueness around the world. In this year’s budget, our government will announce initiatives to build on that success.

Innovation, Education and Economic Growth

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

For a decade, our government has been fostering innovation and diversifying the provincial economy, supporting start-up businesses, emerging growth sectors and regional development activities. We are committed to making local companies globally competitive,

strengthening employment opportunities and driving economic diversification in Newfoundland and Labrador. Through our Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, we are enabling more than fifty companies to increase their competitiveness through the implementation of industry-leading “lean manufacturing” practices. For some firms, the shift has been transformational. One central Newfoundland small business has more than doubled production. Others have seen delivery times cut in half, significant reductions in defects, and have improved safety and morale. Our government will drive the use of lean manufacturing techniques by more enterprises while helping them collaborate and learn from one another through our support of business networks.

Newfoundland and Labrador’s major industrial projects have fueled the growth of a supply community that is more than 600 strong. These enterprises, in turn, represent the development of an extensive knowledge base and skills inventory that can be marketed beyond our provincial boundaries. The expertise we draw here for those industrial projects will remain and fuel growth long after the projects have been completed.

International business growth opportunities for local enterprises are off the charts because of free trade, international partnerships, supply chain networks, and other fundamental shifts in the global marketplace. But the global marketplace is complex and competitive. To help industries meet the increasing rigorous demands and secure their niche, our government will provide targeted trade-focused assistance for small and medium sized enterprises pursuing international business opportunities.

We also recognize that building a strong diversified economy is based upon a strong private sector comprising a mix of smaller, nimble firms working alongside large multinational companies that are entrenched in global markets. That is why attracting foreign direct investment and attracting companies with international reach to the Province continues to be one of our trade and investment priorities.

Prospects for growth in the knowledge-based economy, in particular, are incredible. By

providing support for business incubation and acceleration, we are helping advanced-technology firms with high growth potential to tap into new markets and connect with venture capital opportunities that will propel them to global success.

In no area of technology are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians better positioned to lead than in ocean technology. Here on the North Atlantic, we have nurtured a culture of innovation that has enabled us to make breathtaking advances in the oil and gas sector, fisheries and aquaculture, transportation, environment, marine recreation, tourism, security and defence industries. We have built infrastructure and expertise second to none, and are now partnering with other businesses in the largest ocean technology markets in the world. Our government will be even more aggressive in driving ocean technology growth to meet demand abroad and draw opportunities and profits home.

With unsurpassed expertise in taming the harsh ocean environment, Newfoundland and Labrador is well-positioned to take a lead role in developing technology to provide solutions to operational challenges in the Arctic. Our government is focusing on three strategic directions under the Arctic Opportunities Initiative: first, positioning the Province as a path to the Arctic; second, building capacity; and third, fostering economic development and business opportunities for local players. Newfoundland and Labrador is strategically located on international and northern sea shipping routes, with world-renowned industrial infrastructure plus centres of excellence in safe and sustainable resource development already in place. That makes us uniquely positioned for leadership in Arctic-related activities. Our government will continue to strengthen relationships among stakeholders, promote partnerships involving local and Aboriginal players, and forge strategic alliances with northern jurisdictions with which Newfoundland and Labrador can partner for success on this emerging frontier.

We have strengthened our position for leadership in R&D. Through our Province’s Research & Development Corporation, we will continue to invest in R&D projects that maximize the impact

on our economy and attract leveraged investments from collaborative partners, particularly our innovative business community.

As Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic engage in world-class research activities, researchers from at home and abroad are focusing their R&D activities on local industries and putting them into practice both here and around the globe. As an example, with the government's support, Memorial University's Holyrood Marine Base is now giving students hands-on experience in marine environmental studies, marine biology, marine ecotourism, diving and oil spill response.

To ensure Memorial University has space to grow, our government has approved the construction of a new Core Science Facility to replace aging infrastructure. This facility will house state-of-the-art teaching and research laboratories to support MUN's faculties of Science and Engineering and Applied Science. It will also contain space for R&D collaboration with industry to help them compete, grow and diversify our economy. The Province's \$125 million contribution will come from the settlement for Hebron fabrication work.

Tomorrow's leaders are today's youth! To position Newfoundland and Labrador's young people to be the leaders of the pack, we will support innovative projects that engage youth in meaningful, experimental learning opportunities focused on the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, but also in the creative world of the arts. Such support and mentorship will open doors for local youth while ensuring that Newfoundland and Labrador secures a sustainable, dynamic, and diversified economy for generations to come.

Our government is preparing for the release of its Population Growth Strategy, which will support residents to attach to the labour market and align the workforce with local job opportunities; enhance supports for families of all sizes and ages; support community well-being and economic development; and increase the attraction and retention of immigrants to the Province. To support the strategy, the government will be launching a series of new labour market information tools to better inform Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and those

interested in moving to our Province, about where job opportunities exist in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Increasing the availability of skilled trade workers has been a top priority for our government since the release of the Skills Task Force report in May 2007. Through a series of apprenticeship forums, the government has engaged employers, educators, students, and graduates to chart the way forward. The results have been phenomenal: an investment of more than \$100 million in apprenticeship support, which is a 94 per cent increase in the number of registered apprentices, and a 122 per cent increase in the number of journeyperson certificates issued. In 2014, Atlantic Premiers signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization to enhance consistency. Together, over the next four years, we are working to harmonize ten Red Seal trades, representing over 60 per cent of apprentices in the Atlantic region. The government is also engaged in developing an Atlantic Apprenticeship Mobility initiative and a Pan-Canadian Mobility Apprenticeship Protocol to make it easier for apprentices to move between provinces and territories while they complete their certification. This will enable local industries to meet their labour demands while greatly expanding the region in which local apprentices can work. Our government has repeatedly consulted with stakeholders to ensure our apprenticeship system continues to respond to industry needs. We will build on this approach through additional stakeholder engagement sessions organized in consultation with the Provincial Trade Advisory Committees. The apprenticeship renewal initiatives under discussion will include implementation of an online application and registration process, alternate approaches to apprenticeship training and exam accommodations, youth apprenticeship programming, enhanced apprenticeship supports, enhanced processes for updating files, and an enhanced pre-apprentice tracking system. We will ensure our approaches are relevant and responsive to each specific trade in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To better prepare our young people for post-secondary education and employment, we will proceed with a K-12 curriculum renewal in many areas, including English Language Arts,

Science, Health, Social Studies, and French programs. We will develop a 21st-century curriculum, employing methods that integrate innovative and research-driven teaching strategies, modern learning technologies, and relevant resources and contexts, and focusing on learning skills that address the needs of a new generation of students. We will also convene a group of educational leaders to review Math performance. To support teaching with the requisite infrastructure, our government will unveil a multi-year K-12 infrastructure development plan to prepare in a proactive way for projected growth.

These efforts in K-12 will be complemented by the initiatives we are taking to follow through in the area of early childhood development. The Early Childhood Learning Framework, entitled “Navigating the Early Years”, will be released in the year ahead. The Framework outlines a pedagogical approach to holistic early childhood learning and development, with specific emphasis on play-based learning, the important role of adults in supporting children’s learning and development, and the inclusion of children with exceptionalities across a variety of environments, which include home, child care settings, the community, and the school.

When today’s children grow up, they will find a Province very different from the one we live in today, and a large part of the reason for that difference will be the transformation we experience as we bring Lower Churchill power on stream and complete the transition to a renewable energy economy. That transition has been made possible because of our government’s commitment to embrace the opportunities created by offshore oil, and channel the returns into renewable energy development. Muskrat Falls is a power source that will flow in perpetuity, long after the last of the oil and gas have been drawn from beneath the ocean floor.

But the days of oil are not ending any time soon. The 2013 Bay du Nord discovery was the largest conventional oil discovery that year in the entire world. Our government is working with Statoil and Husky to negotiate an agreement to bring this project to development. Our government is also working to conclude a new generic royalty regime to maximize revenues from offshore oil

development. Our government’s optimism is also buoyed by the successful Call for Bids in the Flemish Pass Basin, the significant growth of reserve estimates for the Hibernia field, and the opportunities created by the new scheduled land tenure system.

In March, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board issued the very first Call for Bids under the scheduled land tenure regime in our offshore area. It consists of eleven parcels totaling 2.5 hectares in the Eastern Newfoundland Region, and the minimum bid of each parcel is \$10 million in work commitments. The new land tenure regime means transparency and predictability for companies interested in doing business in our offshore industry. It was developed through consultation with industry leaders and is based on the best practices of leading exploration jurisdictions around the world. The new regime is a huge step forward in the Province’s offshore industry.

In every region, we take steps to ensure our environment is protected. This year, we will receive the report of the expert panel reviewing the environmental and socio-economic implications of hydraulic fracturing in Western Newfoundland. We will also enact legislation this year to strengthen the Province’s oil spill liability regime to ensure even greater diligence to prevent spills and their consequences.

Since 2012, our government has been working with other provinces and territories to develop a pan-Canadian Energy Strategy. Our government’s primary focus has been to achieve open-access, non-discriminatory electricity transmission. To that end, we will continue to press for the establishment of east-west energy corridors so that all provinces and territories have the unfettered ability to transmit electricity within Canada. Our Premier has met with government and industry leaders both nationally and in the United States, where interest in new clean-energy sources is strong.

We remain on track to produce first power at Muskrat Falls in late 2017 with full power in 2018. Through the new oversight processes implemented last year, the government is taking a hands-on approach to ensure the project remains on course. Construction of the

Maritime Link Project to bring our surplus power to market has commenced, and industrial and employment benefits agreements have been signed. In advance of first power two years from now in late 2017, our government has taken steps to ensure the existing infrastructure is adequate to meet domestic needs. The government will soon complete its electricity review of all aspects of our Province's current system, including governance and regulation, generation, transmission, and distribution. As Muskrat Falls comes on stream, our government will continue to look further ahead to opportunities to add Gull Island power, Upper Churchill power, wind power, and other power sources to the mix and maximize the potential of our vast energy warehouse. To complement this green energy initiative, our government will also bring forward other measures to promote greenhouse gas reduction.

Let no one minimize the economic impact the Muskrat Falls Project is having on Newfoundland and Labrador, even before power flows. The project is expected to generate value and cash flows in excess of \$30 billion. The number of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians employed on the project rose in 2014 to 3,274, representing 81 per cent of the project's workforce. In 2014 alone, the project brought investments of \$394 million to 500 Newfoundland and Labrador businesses. This was just the beginning.

We are developing clean energy, not primarily to export, but to give Newfoundlanders and Labradorians access to a sufficient supply of clean power at costs that are both low and stable, and also to use that new power to grow and diversify the economies of our regions with new and expanding industries. One of those industries, the mining sector, is currently experiencing the impacts of the downside of cycling commodity prices. This is difficult news for impacted workers, their families, and local businesses. Through the strong relationships we have built with industry and municipalities, supported by our participation in the Labrador West Regional Task Force, we are standing by and working with affected communities and families during this critical period. Programs and services are already in place, along with assistance to support new business opportunities. But as in the past, commodity prices will

rebound and growth in our mining sector will resume its upward trajectory. Our government is developing a Minerals Strategy to maximize the value of resource development in the Province. We will continue to support the mineral industry through the mineral incentive program, public geoscience, and promotions. We have taken advantage of opportunities to enhance the benefits of one of the largest mining and processing operations in the Province at Voisey's Bay and Long Harbour. Thanks to that work, Newfoundland and Labrador will benefit from an estimated additional \$200 million in compensation and a \$30 million commitment for community initiatives in the Province. The Long Harbour nickel processing plant is now producing, and Vale has committed to proceed with underground mining after its surface operation advances at Voisey's Bay.

Mining has been sustaining local communities for generations, but no industry has sustained us longer than the fisheries. Today, the entire Newfoundland and Labrador seafood industry is valued at approximately \$1 billion and employs approximately 18,000 people in harvesting, processing and aquaculture, while generating indirect benefits for many more individuals and enterprises.

In 2014, our government took unprecedented steps to improve markets for cod harvested from the St. Pierre Bank area. They included temporarily relaxing minimum processing requirements to test fresh markets in the United States and authorizing outside buyers. These measures complemented efforts by the harvesting and processing sector to establish quality grading for cod, resulting in significantly improved prices. Cod landings increased, and the overall landed value increased. Our government will continue these efforts to prepare for the shift from shellfish to groundfish over the coming years.

The shellfish sector is in jeopardy because of a troubling Government of Canada policy on shrimp allocations. Last year, we sent an All-Party Committee on Northern Shrimp Allocations to Ottawa to deliver the message that the Province will not stand by and watch the devastation of the inshore shrimp fleet, onshore shrimp processing plants, and the hundreds of communities that depend on the Northern

shrimp resource. Recent analysis has confirmed that the federal government's "Last In, First Out" allocation policy has had a disproportionate detrimental impact on this Province's inshore fleet and onshore processing. The Committee will continue to press the federal government to abolish the inequitable LIFO policy being used for the Northern shrimp industry.

Our government also continues to be resolute in demanding that the Government of Canada respect its agreement with Newfoundland and Labrador to provide fully \$280 million as its share of a \$400 million fisheries investment fund for industry development and renewal. Ottawa agreed to provide fully \$280 million for the fund as a condition of our acceptance of the elimination of minimum processing requirements in order to facilitate the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, known as CETA. Our government demands that Ottawa honour its covenant with Newfoundland and Labrador.

The future of the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador is bright. Our government will continue to work closely with the seafood industry to market local seafood internationally, leading delegations to major trade missions in the United States, the European Union and Asia while bringing buyers here. We will also continue to support local awareness of our seafood products in collaboration with the Province's Restaurant Association and the Association of Chefs and Cooks. We will continue to disseminate information on market prices, trends, market conditions, supply and demand, currency exchange rates, inventory levels and more. To assist the processing and harvesting sectors in negotiating raw material prices for various fish species, we will continue to work with the industry to ensure timely and relevant market information is available to all parties in the collective bargaining process.

Our government is also proud to be supporting the sealing industry as it capitalizes on opportunities associated with seal processing. There is a reason to be optimistic about the future of this sustainable and humane harvest, given the long-standing role of Carino Processing and the introduction this year of

PhocaLux International as an additional player in the industry.

Last year, the government released the five-year Aquaculture Sustainable Management Strategy reflecting extensive consultations on the future of the aquaculture industry. The strategy confirms the Province's commitment to work co-operatively with all stakeholders to ensure the industry's long-term growth through sustainable management, capacity support, and Research & Development. In the ten years from 2003 to 2013, employment in the aquaculture industry grew fourfold to nearly 900 person years, and the GDP generated by the industry grew tenfold to more than \$100 million. With the strategy in place, that growth is just the start.

Our government also remains strongly committed to initiatives that will drive further growth in the agriculture and forest industries, which employ large numbers of people and generate significant economic activity. To promote food security in line with the vision of the Growing Forward initiative, our government will work with agrifoods producers to explore opportunities to make our Province more reliant on local crops.

Our government will continue to leverage the strengths of our rural and urban areas, as well as our highly skilled workforce and well-developed infrastructure, to strategically market Newfoundland and Labrador as a great place to live, work and do business. We will continue to use our strategic attributes to attract foreign investment and encourage companies to expand to our Province.

Health and Safety

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Following the success of the Premier's Summit on Health Care, our government will continue to work with stakeholders, including health care professionals, patients and our regional health authorities, to improve the health and wellness of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We will explore ways to ensure our residents have better access to the services they need and are supported to make healthy decisions to enhance their physical and mental well-being by

improving our health care system. A great focus will be placed on primary health care, particularly in the areas of health promotion and prevention, chronic disease management, mental health and addictions, and supports for our seniors as they age.

We will increase access to health services and improve both patient and health care provider satisfaction by working with our health professional governing bodies to facilitate all of our health care professionals working to their full scope of practice. In particular, following upon the recent expansion of the pharmacist's scope of practice to include the ability to administer medication via injection, we will work towards allowing pharmacists to prescribe for some defined minor ailments.

The mental and physical well-being of our population is a top priority. That is why we invest in health promotion and disease prevention initiatives, such as our publicly funded immunization program, which provides vaccines for children at no cost to their families. Our childhood vaccination program boasts a coverage rate of 95 per cent, the envy of other jurisdictions in the country. We will continue to offer cost-effective vaccines to help protect our children from childhood diseases.

Our government is acutely aware of the challenges some of our citizens face with mental health and addictions issues, and is committed to ensuring programs and services are in place for those who need them. Over the past five years, we have invested an additional \$60 million for mental health and addictions services. Because money is not always the answer, we need to look at all aspects of mental health and addictions services, including the prevention-to-aftercare continuum, and assess how best to improve the system for the future. That is why our government has established the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and its review of the system. Recommendations from the Committee will inform a new provincial Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Our government continues to ensure innovative ways of accessing services. Our e-mental health program will be improved to help support families and children by reducing wait times for children with mild-to-moderate

behavioural problems through the use of technology.

Health system effectiveness and sustainability are directly linked to the quality and efficiency of the health workforce. We are fortunate to have well-trained and competent health professionals who deliver safe, quality care to the people of our Province. We will implement a strategic health workforce plan to consolidate existing initiatives and programs, including workforce projections, into a unified and strengthened provincial approach. The plan will help enhance the stability of the health workforce and improve the health care services provided to the residents of the Province.

We remain more committed than ever to a fair and just society – to care for those who are vulnerable and to support those who face barriers to living full, equitable and healthy lives. Reducing poverty will continue to be among our government's highest priorities. Since the Province's first Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan in 2006, our government has invested more than a billion dollars in poverty reduction initiatives to give people a step up from poverty to self-reliance. In just eight years, this approach has helped Newfoundland and Labrador reduce reliance on income support to the lowest level in our Province's history. We have engaged more than 1,000 people province-wide and followed with a Poverty Reduction Summit to gather recommendations that will inform our second Poverty Reduction Action Plan, which we will bring forward this year.

Our government is also developing an Inclusion Action Plan to deliver on the objectives of the Strategy for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The Action Plan will outline concrete initiatives in five areas: changing how we think about disability, engaging people with disabilities, removing barriers from the built environment, enhancing access to disability-related supports and delivering services with dignity and respect.

Our government is focused on promoting healthy aging across the lifespan and fostering a healthy society which honours, listens to and includes seniors and older persons in building stronger, more dynamic communities. We are

living longer lives, and we also want to live better lives. Through our provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework, we are identifying actions we can take to address the particular needs that seniors face.

The Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development will take the leadership role in developing an integrated, horizontal approach to wellness through the new Provincial Wellness Plan. Having taken a range of actions on matters from nutrition and fitness to tobacco control, our government will work with the Provincial Wellness Advisory Council and other partners on this new Provincial Wellness Plan. It will complement our primary health care system and build a co-ordinated provincial government approach across departments and sectors to advance the wellness of our population's health and to reduce disparities.

Healthy living means access to housing. Our government has received the independent consultant's report on homelessness entitled "A Road Map for Ending Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador". The report offers a series of recommendations to consider. A steering committee representing the government and community-based organizations has been established to thoroughly review its recommendations and to map out an action plan. Our government will also continue to invest in affordable housing under a new five-year federal-provincial agreement.

Our Foster a Future campaign has been extremely successful since its implementation, and continues to create awareness surrounding the need for more foster parents who can provide safe and nurturing environments for our most vulnerable children and youth. To date, the campaign has focused in the approval of 175 new placements in 115 foster homes. The government has worked to provide programming and residential placement for children and youth with complex emotional, medical, and/or behavioural needs. We will build on this work in the year ahead.

Some families in Newfoundland and Labrador have complex needs. It is incumbent on the Province to intervene to protect children who are being maltreated or abused by their parents. Our government recognizes the importance of

ensuring that children and youth in out-of-home residential placements receive the best services possible. The protection and healthy development of our children and youth is paramount. Through the Continuum of Care Strategy, our government is striving to ensure children and youth in need of out-of-home care are being matched with placement options that best meet their specific needs. In the coming year, CYFS will continue to strengthen its policies and programs to ensure this Province has one of the best child protection systems in the country.

Our Province has been participating in a Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group to work on ways to address the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in care across the country. The government has reached out to local Aboriginal governments and organizations for input on this initiative. A report will be presented to Premiers this summer when the Council of the Federation meets in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our government is very encouraged by the positive results of the one-year pilot project that brought two experienced child protection social workers into the Sheshatshiu office to serve as peer-support mentors. We are encouraged by the results of the Community of Natuashish Service Enhancement Program (CONSEP), which sees social workers flying into Natuashish on two-week rotations, and by Planning Circles, through which our officials and Aboriginal community leaders work together on strategies for the communities. A collaborative approach with community leaders is improving service delivery in Aboriginal communities as well as planning for the safety and well-being of children and youth. Challenges remain, and our government will be a willing partner to address substance abuse challenges that deeply concern all of us. Our government will continue to strengthen partnerships with the leaders of Aboriginal communities, particularly in Labrador, to deliver innovative approaches to child, youth, and family services. We will continue to adapt our foster families training to better reflect Aboriginal communities and culture. We will work to identify additional foster homes that will enable children in need of out-of-home placement to remain within their

communities or closer to their home or community, to ensure continued connections with their culture.

Public safety in our communities and for our residents is a top priority. In January 2015, our government demonstrated its commitment to enhancing public safety through the creation of the Premier's Advisory Council on Crime and Community Safety. This Council will examine all aspects of crime in Newfoundland and Labrador and recommend new strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity and enhance safety in the Province.

Every member of our society has the right to live free from the fear of violence. Intimate partner and domestic violence is a very real and complex societal challenge impacting vulnerable women and children throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. This past year saw the establishment of the Intimate Partner Violence Initiative with Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police through additional dedicated resources. Our government has evaluated the piloted Family Violence Intervention Court that was in St. John's and intends to roll out a new court this year that will have a broader provincial reach.

In 2014-2015, we invested significantly in the Sheriff's Office. As a testament to our commitment to safety, we introduced Point of Entry Security Screening at Family Court in St. John's and at the Corner Brook courthouse. Work will continue in the year ahead in keeping with recommendations of the Sheriff's Office Review, to implement new Point of Entry Security Screening at Supreme Court Trial Division in St. John's.

The Roil Review commissioned by our government in 2014 recommended numerous amendments to the *Legal Aid Act*, including provisions relating to the size of the Board of Commissioners of the Legal Aid Commission, and prescribing a tariff rate by regulations. In keeping with our commitment to fully implement the Review recommendations, my government will introduce these and other improvements to the *Legal Aid Act* in the coming weeks.

In his 2013 report entitled, "Access to Justice – A Roadmap for Change", Supreme Court of Canada Justice Thomas Cromwell noted a strong need to improve access to civil and family justice in Canada, particularly for the most vulnerable in our society. As a means of improving access to justice for all participants in the court process in this Province, our government will ensure that the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador is properly resourced to revise its Rules of Court in 2015-2016. These have not been modernized since 1986. The outcome will be a more simplified court process; faster, more user-friendly access to court services; and a resolution process proportionate to the complexity of the matter before the court. Self-represented litigants, in particular, will benefit from revisions in the Rules of Court when engaging on their own behalf in the court process.

Responsible and Responsive Governance

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

There are many other things the government might have chosen to do this year if it were not faced with the unprecedented and unanticipated drop in revenue caused by the precipitous drop in the price of oil. But responsible governance demands fiscal prudence. In this year's Budget, our Finance Minister will present a plan to return Newfoundland and Labrador to a balanced budget in 2020-2021.

Having negotiated a solution to provide stability to the Public Service Pension Plan, our government will follow through with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association on the agreement in principle to bring financial sustainability to the Teachers' Pension Plan.

Having consulted with more than 500 stakeholders, our government this year will announce a new Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Framework to provide efficient and effective ways for sustainable services to be delivered, paid for, and shared in the Province.

Our government is preparing to modernize the *Lands Act*, and make the Crown lands application process simpler and the service

delivery model more effective. This will be informed by a comprehensive review, the consultation component of which is nearing completion.

Our government is committed to ensuring that the Province's youth and the agencies that serve them have opportunities to inform the government's programs, services, policies, and decisions. Building on a number of interactive learning events, workshops, town-halls, schools-based activities, and online engagement sessions held across the Province in recent years, our government recently re-launched the Premier's Youth Advisory Committee. Twenty-three high school, post-secondary and workforce-aged individuals were appointed in early 2015 after a Province-wide expression of interest process generated 71 applications. The newly mandated Premier's Youth Advisory Committee is tasked with developing policy- and decision-making advice and submitting it directly to the government. Our government is eager and determined to work collaboratively with the people it serves.

Better collaboration is the key to promoting provincial and regional prosperity. Our government's Office of Public Engagement will launch a new Social Innovation/Collaboration Incentive Fund to bring together diverse partners across all sectors – business, labour, community, academia and government – to collaborate on innovative projects that demonstrate new and effective ways of working together on common or complementary goals.

Our government is developing Newfoundland and Labrador's first Open Government Action Plan, reflecting the best 'open government' practices in the world. The plan will nurture a culture of openness within the government by promoting access to information and data and enhanced dialogue and collaboration on initiatives. Under this plan, Newfoundland and Labrador will become, by 2020, one of the most open and accessible jurisdictions anywhere in the world.

Our government will bring forward, as its first Bill, the strongest Access to Information and Protection of Privacy legislation anywhere in Canada, reflecting in their entirety the recommendations that the Honourable Clyde

Wells, Ms Jennifer Stoddart and Mr. Doug Letto submitted in March. Our government commends the review committee members for their outstanding work.

Our Premier is driving a process to reform the House of Assembly by enhancing the roles of individual members, reviewing the compensation of members who hold special positions in the Legislature, reviewing MHA pensions, reducing the number of seats, and opening legislation to better scrutiny. Newfoundland and Labrador led the country in legislative reform following the publication of "Rebuilding Confidence" in 2007, and we are ready to do even more to ensure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are served by the most progressive Legislature in the country.

We are proud of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are proud of people like teenagers T.J. Fitzpatrick, Justin Saunders, and James Stapleton, who came to the rescue when flames engulfed a Marystow hotel and were instrumental in saving the lives of people caught up in the blaze.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: We are proud of people like Jiffy Cabs dispatcher Jay Dunn, who calmly talked a distraught dad through CPR to save the life of his seventeen-month-old child.

We are proud of people like 911 dispatcher Shelley Kelly, who saved a Labrador West family suffering from deadly carbon monoxide poisoning by keeping the ailing mom alert and coaching her to get fresh air into the cabin before help arrived.

We are proud of people like Desiree Foote, a new recruit with the St. George's Volunteer Fire Department, who – in a blizzard too severe for a fire truck – joined Captain Robbie Tobin on his ATV and sped to resuscitate an unconscious man who had suffered a heart attack.

There are no finer people on the face of the earth than Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and they deserve nothing but the best.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR:

Our government is buoyed with optimism as our people begin to come into their own, enjoying the highest levels of income ever in our history, employment levels that are higher than a decade ago, and a vast array of initiatives that enhance the lives of the oldest to the youngest among us. Our government is managing the affairs of the Province responsibly, progressively and sustainably to ensure the incredible gains we have already achieved are eclipsed only by the phenomenal gains that we are about to bring to fruition. Newfoundland and Labrador is stronger today than it has ever been and we are on a course to achieve goals that will benefit our people for generations. Our government is filled with confidence and optimism that the prospects for Newfoundland and Labrador, both in the short term and over the long term, are incredibly bright. Ours is a future that knows no bounds, and shall ever remain resolute in defence of this Province we so dearly love – Newfoundland and Labrador, proud and strong.

Estimates of expenditure will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty. I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence this new session. May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.

Thank you very much.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

[His Honour the Lieutenant Governor leaves the Assembly Chamber]

[Mr. Speaker returns to the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Please be seated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I give notice and ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Provide The

Public With Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy, Bill 1.

MR. SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 1, An Act To Provide The Public With Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy be now read the first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Provide The Public With Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy. (Bill 1)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 1 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to make a speech to the members in this General Assembly, and we shall now take a few minutes to distribute the speech.

[The Pages distribute the Speech to all members].

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Chair would recognize the mover of the Speech, the hon. Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a privilege to rise in this hon. House today to represent the people from the beautiful District of Baie Verte – Springdale and to respond to the Speech from the Throne that was so eloquently delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank His Honour for delivering today's Speech. It was truly encouraging and inspirational. It charts the course of our upcoming legislative agenda. The Speech from the Throne clearly reveals an impressive and a comprehensive plan that this government has developed for the Province's future. Our government has a strong track record of initiating valuable public services for our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to hear that under the Premier's passionate, decisive leadership, our government will continue to focus on serving the people, with the goal of improving the quality of life for all citizens. Nothing is more rewarding than witnessing, seeing, and making improvements to the lives of people. It truly motivates all of us.

Mr. Speaker, in this Province, we have a multitude of very impressive, caring individuals who inspire all of us. As alluded to by His Honour, Dr. Gladys Osmond was one of those individuals. From the District of Baie Verte – Springdale, I might add, Dr. Osmond wrote over 500,000 letters to members of the Armed Forces. She recognized the contribution that our former and current servicemen and women have made and continue to make. Her compassion for others and dedication is something to which we can all aspire.

I had the privilege to visit her and chat with her on numerous occasions. She always wanted to help people. She always had a heartwarming story to tell. If she was alive today, Mr.

Speaker, I am confident that she would be in support of the focus on people which today's Throne Speech reveals.

Through the Speech from the Throne we heard that our government will continue to provide quality services in the areas of education, health care, poverty reduction, and seniors, just to mention a few. Over the past decade, our government has transformed this Province and opened it up to new and exciting opportunities. Under our Premier's focused, genuine, and sincere leadership, the people of this Province can anticipate more bright days ahead and a government which truly cares about them.

Mr. Speaker, our government's commitment to our most precious resources, our children and students, has never been stronger. Through our 10-Year Child Care Strategy, we have increased the number of regulated child care spaces by 70 per cent and have made increases to the child care services subsidy. We have also provided our children with every opportunity for success by initiating the early childhood learning strategy: Learning from the Start.

Mr. Speaker, our students deserve the very best education we can provide them. Since 2003, our government has increased investments in the K to 12 system from \$591 million to \$872 million.

To put this in perspective, Mr. Speaker, it means the per pupil expenditure at the K to 12 level has increased from \$7,412 in 2003 to \$13,000 in 2014. That is a whopping 75 per cent increase. It is the best in Atlantic Canada and among the best in the country. That is worth celebrating, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Mr. Speaker, we realized when we took office in 2003 our education system was not where it needed to be. Our students were falling behind those from across the country. They were learning from outdated materials and in outdated mouldy, leaky buildings.

As a former teacher, I am very pleased we have addressed both of these issues, Mr. Speaker. We have ushered in new curriculums and have built state-of-the-art facilities. Here is an example,

the new K to 12 school in Baie Verte is a state-of-the-art facility. It serves many communities on the Baie Verte Peninsula. Copper Ridge Academy provides a positive, modern environment in which all of our students can learn and perform to the best of their ability.

Mr. Speaker, it is well enough to list what we have done, but the education outcomes speak for themselves. Because of our focused investments, our students are ranked first in Atlantic Canada in science and reading, as reported by the 2014 Pan-Canadian Assessment Program. In addition, mathematics assessment scores have improved by an overwhelming fifteen points. Is it worth celebrating? Sure it is, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, just a decade ago a mere 58 per cent of students were graduating at the academic or honours level. Now, to date, 70 per cent of our students are achieving these benchmarks. Mr. Speaker, this means our students now have many more employment and educational opportunities from which to choose.

Mr. Speaker, as the youth would say – in my day anyway – that is totally awesome. That is worth celebrating. Our government's investment in education have truly made a difference. I say a great big thank you to all of our caring, dedicated teachers, and all of our stakeholders in education, for their outstanding contributions they make on a daily basis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Mr. Speaker, another area which His Honour talked about today is health care. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and Community Services, I am very pleased to hear of the continued commitment to provide high quality, safe, and accessible services. Through strategic investments, we have doubled the number of dialysis sites and have opened new health care facilities in Labrador City and Paradise, and there are many other projects at various stages.

This means that more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can avail of health care services closer to home. This minimizes the disruption of people's daily lives – which is so important to every single person, Mr. Speaker. I am so

pleased to stand here in this hon. House and say that access to health care has incredibly improved.

A recent report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information has determined that from 2010 to 2014 wait times for key procedures have been significantly reduced in our Province. Our wait times regarding hip replacement, knee replacements, and cataract surgeries have all substantially improved. We now lead the country in access to these three services, and other provinces are looking to us for guidance.

Now, Mr. Speaker, imagine that. Other provinces are looking to Newfoundland and Labrador for guidance. There was a time that just would not happen. We were far from leaders, but today that has totally changed. Isn't that worth celebrating, Mr. Speaker? Sure it is. I do not have much to celebrate these days, Mr. Speaker. At least there is golfing.

Mr. Speaker, we also heard earlier today that mental health and addictions continues to be a key priority to this government. Our government has recognized that there are many experienced and professional and knowledgeable people who have a lot to offer on this subject matter. We want to engage them. That is why we have formed an all-party committee, on which I am proud to serve. Consultation with all stakeholders is paramount as we attempt to develop a plan to address mental health and addictions issues and the needs in our Province. We are on our way to do just that, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully make a huge difference.

Mr. Speaker, the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is applicable to the approach to health care and healthy living which we have heard in today's speech. As a former physical education teacher with almost thirty years of experience, I personally understand how regular physical activity and healthy eating contribute to overall good health and well-being. Therefore, I am especially proud of the commitment of our Premier and our government to promote a healthier, more active Province.

As the great philosopher Socrates once said: a sound mind equals a sound body – yes, a sound

body equals a sound mind. As noted in the Speech from the Throne, our government will continue to work with our community partners to advance the well-being of the people of the Province.

Currently, our government provides financial support to forty-seven agencies and community groups that deliver programs, services, and initiatives to promote healthy, active living. That is huge. We have invested in healthy eating programs, recreational facilities, parks, and school physical fitness equipment. Mr. Speaker, these investments have positively impacted the physical, mental, and social well-being of all participants. I received positive feedback in my district, and right around the Province, from individuals who have benefitted from the various supports that are available to them today.

Mr. Speaker, when the Premier created the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, he not only showed true caring leadership and creativity, but he also renewed our government's focus on proactive healthy living. This department also focuses on helping seniors to age gracefully and enhance their quality of life. Seniors blazed the trail for us. Seniors deserve all the attention we give them. Seniors volunteer, and they are still volunteering. Seniors are still engaged. Seniors made us who we are today.

Over the past four years, Mr. Speaker, we have invested more than \$1.2 million to age-friendly grants to promote healthy aging. We have also invested almost \$1 million for healthy aging research, and \$1.3 million for a three-year age friendly transportation pilot project. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government which has the creativity and the dedication to promote healthy living for all age groups with an emphasis on seniors. They are so dear to us, Mr. Speaker. They are fountains of wealth and wisdom. We love them.

Mr. Speaker, in my district we have several initiatives which are improving the lives of seniors. We have the Care 2 Ride program which is a multi-community model that provides transportation to seniors and individuals who have mobility challenges. We also have the Life Unlimited for Older Adults group in Springdale.

This group engages older adults in the planning and promoting of social, recreational, and educational activities which encourage healthy, active living. These are just two of the many examples of community projects right across the Province which works to increase the quality of life for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, our government's accomplishments are endless. We have achieved much over the past decade through focusing on meeting the needs of the Province's residents, ordinary Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As outlined in today's Speech from the Throne, this focus on serving the people of this Province will continue, absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, I now move that a select committee be appointed to draft an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the people of the beautiful District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, it is indeed a pleasure for me to rise in this hon. House today and second the motion that a select committee be appointed to draft an Address in Reply to this year's Speech from the Throne.

I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to sincerely thank my constituents for the support they have shown me over the last seven years and for allowing me the honour of representing them in the House of Assembly. I would also like to thank His Honour for delivering the Speech from the Throne which clearly outlines the comprehensive plan this government has developed for the future of our Province.

It outlines the sound management decisions and solid approach of our government to grow a stronger and more diversified economy for Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, it is

that same approach which has brought us through the global recession virtually unscathed and will now help us move forward to overcome the challenges we currently face.

Many governments all over the world have the same challenges, but I am very confident that the strong foundation we have built will equip us to advance us on our path to economic prosperity. To that end, we will continue to diversify our economy and follow our long-term objectives, as outlined in the Throne Speech His Honour delivered here today.

This government has long recognized a pressing need to expand our sources of revenue generation in order to maintain a fiscally strong Newfoundland and Labrador. In recent years, we have worked diligently towards achieving this goal and we will continue to focus on finding and developing new and renewable revenue streams.

Our investments in tourism, fisheries, marine innovation, and aquaculture, along with other renewal resources, have generated revenue in various areas all across this Province. For example, Mr. Speaker, as a result of our government's investments in the aquaculture sector, it has become one of the fastest growing industries in the Province and, today, employs over 6,500 people in rural communities all across Newfoundland and Labrador. It generates annual farm gate revenues of \$150 million, and the processing sector has reached revenues of over \$500 million a year. I am very proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that our government has always appreciated the importance and potential of the aquaculture industry.

As the MHA for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, I speak from experience when I say that aquaculture has become a key driver of the provincial economic and has transformed the fortunes of many rural communities. Aquaculture is helping to grow and diversify rural economies all across this Province through direct and indirect job creation and benefits to business both near and far.

You can see the new economic activity created at the salmon operations in my district along the Coast of Bays, or at the mussel operations in the New World Island area, or at the aquaculture

hatchery and fish plants across the Province. Actually, over the past decade, we, as a government, have invested more than \$50 million to put in place the programs and infrastructure that were necessary to help raise the aquaculture sector to a new level. As a result of these investments and private sector investments, aquaculture has grown from a pre-commercial industry worth approximately \$3 million in 1995 to a commercial industry that is worth \$197 million in 2013.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: This growth is absolutely fantastic, Mr. Speaker, and there is more to come. Truly, aquaculture is creating jobs for residents throughout this Province and providing brighter futures for the rural towns in which they operate.

Mr. Speaker, as our hon. Premier stated in his recent address to the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, our approach to economic diversification in the tourism sector is paying off in dividends. In a year when we have had to contend with an unprecedented fall in the price of oil, we are forecasting that the tourism industry will generate more than \$1.1 billion in revenue, and most of it in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, through continued investments in this sector, we expect to surpass \$1.6 billion in revenue by 2020. As you can imagine, this is one of the brightest achievements of our government, and one of which we are all very proud.

Our government also realizes the development of renewable energy sources, and we realize it is essential for Newfoundland and Labrador to maintain sustainable wealth over the long term. By developing Muskrat Falls, we are ensuring that our Province has a clean, reliable, and renewable energy source for many years to come. Muskrat Falls will help minimize the impact of volatile oil prices in the future and will become a major revenue generator for the Province. As His Honour noted in the Throne Speech, economic diversification remains a priority for this government. We will continue to look for ways to further diversify the economy and generate wealth for the people of this Province.

Our investments in education, child care, youth care, seniors' care, health care, and associated infrastructure have been unparalleled but essential to meet the growing needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Today's Throne Speech provides the framework for us to invest strategically in these areas and ensures that we deliver the best possible services to the residents of our Province.

Mr. Speaker, we are a valiant people and with the strong, proven leadership of our Premier, our future has never offered greater potential. I am confident that our Premier and our government will continue to make wise investments, attract new business, harness our resources, diversify our economy, grow our industries, and ensure the health and wellness of our citizens and our communities. This is the right approach, and I am proud to be part of a government with a strong leader at the helm who will responsibly address the needs of our people and continue to lead us on a course of self-reliance.

Mr. Speaker, once again, it is a great honour to second the motion that a select committee be appointed to draft an Address in Reply in response to the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to recognize the fact that we were graced today with the presence of His Honour and, of course, the special guests that we have here on the floor and those who are in the galleries watching today.

His Honour started his speech today, the Speech from the Throne, speaking about 100 years ago and the Honour 100 program. That is a program that I am pleased to say that all members of this House of Assembly supports. Just this very weekend in my own District of Humber Valley, I had the pleasure of meeting with a group of young people who were actually the largest

group of young people that we have had for such a turnout. We had two young people as a result of the essay, poster, and poem contest, who will actually be travelling to Europe this year. When we reflect on where we were 100 years ago, we can be very proud of our heritage and the sacrifices that our young men and women are making in uniform.

In the Speech today it was also mentioned, someone who I know very well – and the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale today also mentioned it in his response. That was a lady by the name of Gladys Osmond, now Dr. Gladys Osmond who passed away just recently. I, too, had the privilege of spending time in Springdale, many hours actually, with Mrs. Osmond and her family over the years.

I can tell you what; as we had soldiers fighting for what we believe in, all over the world, this was certainly a soldier in her own right as she was part of the Granny Brigade right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her letters and the words of encouragement that she sent to her young men and women in uniform were certainly words of encouragement. I, too, want to recognize the great achievement of this fantastic lady.

Mr. Speaker, today's Speech from the Throne is an important opportunity for a government to set their priorities for the upcoming session in the House of Assembly. As Leader of the Official Opposition, this is my fourth reply to the Speech from the Throne. I am thankful for this opportunity to share my thoughts as we work together through these challenging times, and as we begin to move our Province so that we can finally reach our full potential.

The people of our Province are watching and listening intently today with expectations that those issues most important to them will drive the agenda. They have little tolerance for the politics of a tired government. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been let down far too many times and have grown skeptical of this government – and I would say they have grown skeptical of politicians in general – a government that spends more time justifying their history than accepting accountability and working in the best interests of people instead of themselves.

For the past twelve years, people have been looking to this government for strong fiscal management and economic stability. They have been asking for a long-term vision and they have been waiting. They have been waiting for a plan of action that will ensure the best management of our resources, and create the right conditions to both diversify and grow our economy.

However, this government has failed to provide that strong fiscal management. They have failed to take steps to stabilize our economy. They have failed to plan on a 10-Year Sustainability Plan that we watched them roll out just two years ago, a 10-Year Sustainability Plan that lasted just two years. We know why it did not go beyond 2015, because the politics of convenience and expediency took over. They overspent. They did not plan. They did not plan for the rainy day, and now Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and future generations must carry the weight of that burden on their shoulders.

No matter how much the Tories scramble to try and undo this mess, the physical mess that they have created, the damage is done, and the people of this Province are already feeling the impacts of a government that did not manage and did not plan for our future.

The failure to follow through on the sustainability plan is just one of the long lists of plans and strategies that this government has let fall by the wayside. So, it is no surprise then that people have lost confidence and become cynical of this government when it announces a new strategy or another new plan. Because history has shown us that these plans often result in little or no action. They are still on the shelves in departments collecting dust today, I say, Mr. Speaker.

We only look back as (inaudible) and reflect on the \$5 billion infrastructure strategy. This Tory government announced it, they celebrated it, and they spoke of it as if it was a formal strategy that was well underway. Yet, when the Auditor General went looking for this plan, it could not be found because it did not exist. This government could not produce a plan detailing the process of which \$5 billion worth of infrastructure spending – nor were they even willing to share with the Auditor General the

documents outlining how the infrastructure money was spent.

So it is this track record that has left people questioning. Questioning the management, the openness, and the transparency of this government, because this government has given them lots of reasons – a long list of reasons, I say, Mr. Speaker, why they cannot be trusted to do what is in the best interest of the people of this Province for the long term.

So when I say Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are watching and listening intently today, I expect it is also with a great deal of uncertainty – what will be in the long list of this government's promises and plans that will never materialize? This government will soon deliver its twelfth Budget. Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister has already indicated that we can expect what? We can expect another deficit Budget. In fact, he has gone on to predict even more – worse than that: five consecutive years of deficits out to 2020.

I say, Mr. Speaker, we celebrated in 2009 that we were now a have Province, and here we are, five more deficits. This is the Tory's legacy of fiscal mismanagement. After receiving more revenue than ever before in the history of this Province – \$25 billion – and who would have believed that after \$20 billion in oil royalties alone, another \$4.6 billion from the Atlantic Accord, that we would be worse off.

If managed responsibly, that revenue could have helped us weather any any storm, allowing us to control our destiny, not the other way around. This government has had more money than ever before, yet here we are facing the harsh reality of five deficit Budgets delivered under this government. If you take out the Atlantic Accord they would have delivered eight Budgets in eleven years. Taking out the Atlantic Accord, which we knew would expire, if you take that out that is eight Budgets, eight deficits in eleven years. So, that is what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador got in return for this government. They got debt; they got job losses, and missed opportunities I would say, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance is predicting that government will be responsible for thirteen

deficits in sixteen years. That is spanning from 2004 to 2020 – that is thirteen deficits in sixteen years. That is a track record that speaks for itself and one that carries long-term impacts on the well-being of our people, our families, and our communities.

In keeping with the Tory tradition, we know that the upcoming Budget will be a deficit Budget. One that the Finance Minister has said will contain job losses, tax hikes, and fee increases – a Budget where the people of our Province will continue to pay the price for this government's poor management and failure to plan.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance was asked about the potential for cuts. When he was asked about the potential for cuts in the upcoming Budget, this was his answer: We do not have a master plan. So, in the absence of a plan, here we go, we are now in reaction mode, looking for cost savings to get us out of this situation, this mess that we are in. This puts our government and our Province at risk for long-term ramifications when you become reactatory, when you start working with band-aid solutions.

Last November, we saw government implement a freeze on discretionary spending and hiring, and for months later the Premier refused to reduce the size of this Cabinet. Despite the need for further savings, the taxpayers of this Province are still paying for the salaries of five Parliamentary Secretaries. This represents hundreds of thousands of dollars that could be eliminated as an annual expense, but instead this government has decided to look for cost savings elsewhere.

Most recently, their focus has been squarely on wallets of who? Squarely on the wallets of our seniors, looking to collect pension overpayment – pensioners, these are people in their seventies and eighties who have worked hard, have made important contributions to this Province and now faced with the stress of being forced to pay from an already modest income from government. They need to do this, they say, to recover \$930,000. In all likelihood, I say, Mr. Speaker, government will spend more by hiring a consultant and trying to collect from those seniors than the value of the overpayments themselves.

Mr. Speaker, these misplaced priorities are nothing new for this government. While they go after seniors, they have allowed millions of dollars of business loans to be written off, millions in unpaid traffic fines to accumulate, oil royalties to drag on for years, and let's not forget a \$90 million release of bonds for Humber Valley Paving. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve strong management, they deserve long-term planning, and they deserve an open and a caring government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians also deserve an effective and responsible government that is focused on adding certainty to the budgetary process. Year over year government misses their mark when it comes to predicting the price of oil. Here we go today in the Speech from the Throne predicting a balanced budget in 2020.

In all fairness, can anyone in this Province believe that could ever be true from this government when they cannot even predict six months out, let alone five years out? Year over year government misses its mark when it comes to predicting the price of oil, so much that the inaccuracy is expected and losses are the norm. How can we expect the people of this Province to trust the fiscal mismanagement of a government who just cannot seem to get it right?

Government's defence for inaccurate budget predictions is always about the price of oil, always about production. If that was always the case, then why not just remove the oil revenues from general budgeting all together? Real leadership must involve collaboration and openness to recommendations on how to better manage this fiscal reality. Because the way things stand today it will not be an easy way forward, it just means getting smarter and it means working much harder.

A smart visionary government would separate volatile natural resource revenues from stable revenues like taxes. A strategic government would understand that natural resource revenue must be reserved for one-time spending while using stable revenues for long-term planning and spending commitments. It is a simple solution to give some legitimacy to the budgetary

process, a solution that will result in more effective fiscal management. Our Province needs strong management.

The people of our Province deserve to be hopeful for their future. Far too long they have placed their hope in a government only to be shut down, to be let down, and to be forgotten. It is time for leadership that is solid, that is grounded, and that is real.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: It is time for a government that will use innovative solutions to take on the most serious issues we face and bring about positive outcomes, because it is for people. It is for all our people that government must do its work.

This means overcoming some of the biggest challenges in areas like health care and education, and delivering the best systems in the country. It means following through on strategic plans to achieve long-term economic strength and sustainability. It means putting in place the kind of strong fiscal management that our Province needs now more than ever. Only then can the people of Newfoundland and Labrador reach their full potential and will we reach our full potential as a Province.

I would like to take a moment to talk about public inquiries into some of the very serious events and issues in our Province. This government has not been open and transparent and we know that they resist public inquiries. There are a few public inquiries that are a priority for us. Today we heard in the Speech from the Throne and the response about the openness and how by 2020 they would be the most open and transparent government.

Let's remember that it was only a short time ago they stood in their seats and Bill 29 said the very same thing. Here we are today with the repeal essentially of Bill 29 because of the work of the commission. I commend the commission on their work too I say, Mr. Speaker. Here we are just a few short years later, after Bill 29, having to revamp that whole system again.

Mr. Speaker, we have called for inquiries, if you remember, back on search and rescue services in our Province. While this government has the

authority to do so under the Public Inquiries Act, this government refuses and it resists to take actions on this inquiry. This leaves us to question, and people in our Province – it leaves us to question why. Why, as a Province, are we not doing these public inquiries? Our Province has seen more than its share of tragedies. How could any government possibly be satisfied with our current level of search and rescue when we can do much better to keep our people safe?

Mr. Speaker, as the Official Opposition we have also asked government to call an inquiry into the steps that led up to the cancellation of the Humber Valley Paving Contract, but it is the same story, resist and refuse. Why is this government willing to dismiss the concerns about Humber Valley Paving, a company with close ties, as we all know, to a former would-be leader, a former would-be Premier without allowing further investigation?

We all know the Auditor General was not satisfied with a number of the issues, including why this contract had to be cancelled and why \$19 million in bonds had to be released, ironically, on the day before the PC leadership nominations closed. Even though the Auditor General is not satisfied, this government, this Premier, refuses to call an inquiry into the events of Humber Valley Paving.

Now, Mr. Speaker, most recently, there was the tragic death of Mr. Don Dunphy. All members, I am sure, are concerned about the events that led up to and ultimately resulted in his death. We believe an inquiry is needed. When the time comes, let's hope this is not another case of refuse and resist.

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to the people of our Province to restore faith and confidence in our justice system. The issue of openness and accountability continues to be one of this government's struggles when it comes to giving the people of this Province the information they want and deserve to know. Mr. Speaker, that is not where the struggles end. They have also struggled with creating the right conditions for a stronger economy.

This government likes to claim it is focused on the economy, about the promise and prosperity just around the corner. They say they are

addressing the critical shortage of skilled workers in our Province, creating jobs through resource development and paving the way for our youth. Meanwhile, it is under this same government that our Province is facing seventeen consecutive months of job losses.

Mr. Speaker, no other province in Canada has experienced this kind of decrease in employment over the last year. As a result, we have thousands of people, 4,500 more in the last twelve months alone who are out there looking for work. This government would like you to believe it all has to do with the drop in oil prices. I want to be clear, before the drop in oil our economy was already heading in the wrong direction. We were losing jobs. More people were leaving the Province. Housing starts were on the decline, a dramatic drop in capital investment, and debt rising to pre-oil levels. This is bad management. This is poor planning. It is not protecting our future.

Looking forward to job vacancies and training our young people with the skills to match those jobs is critical to our economic success, but today it is evident that this government has done little to advance those efforts and prepare our workforce to meet future demands. Instead of working with our college graduates to access apprenticeships and obtain journeyperson certification, we continue to hear stories of credentials not being recognized. It is further evidence that this government has been satisfied with just doing the bare minimum. These students are the workforce that will drive the provincial economy and if we do not do a better job of setting them up for success and work and raise their families here, we are at risk of losing them to other provinces and other parts of the world – a story, Mr. Speaker, that we all know too well.

These students are also our skilled workers, the bright minds and the innovators that will attract future businesses to our Province and that will drive the potential for economic development. We need to do a better job of managing our natural resources and leveraging opportunities from our large scale projects. This means ensuring strong benefits agreements that are far reaching and result in long-term jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first. This means trading partisanship for partnerships to

strengthen our traditional industries and opportunities on a global scale.

Mr. Speaker, just last year I called for an all-party committee on Northern shrimp to present a united voice to the federal government against harmful cuts to the industry. I believe in partnerships and I believe in collaboration, and I am pleased to say that the Committee continues to present a united voice. In fact, they are in Ottawa today meeting with the federal fisheries minister.

Mr. Speaker, I have great pride in our Province and great pride in our people. Far too much pride to allow Newfoundland and Labrador to be outperformed by every other province in the country in small business growth. We need to provide better access to growth capital for small businesses and entrepreneurs, and invest in our graduates and start-ups across the Province. We need to keep and work with our existing businesses and help them expand.

Just yesterday I met with a young entrepreneur in our Province and I asked: What would it take for you to hire an extra two, three, or four people? There were many ideas of how this could work. We have to work with our small business owners. We have to work with our youth and our young entrepreneurs to accomplish this.

The fact is that in 2015 we still have the lowest rate of small business growth in the country. Mr. Speaker, this unacceptable and it is inexcusable. We need to put the oil money to work and build a labour force to fuel that new growth, create jobs to keep our young people home, and develop an aggressive immigration and homegrown training strategy to replace our rapidly retiring labour pool.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask: What plan does this government have to keep youth and young families in our Province? It is not the Population Growth Strategy, which I understand they are finally going to release since 2012 – not because that program so far has produced any results. We are looking at a declining and shifting of populations in our Province and now, with the fast aging population in the country, our ability to retain and attract young people is not only important, Mr. Speaker, it is urgent.

The economic outlook and the opportunities in our Province are good. I am optimistic about our future, but it is going to take some work and a government that is serious about putting a long-term economic plan into action. This government of twelve years and \$25 billion has admitted – and they have admitted this openly – that they do not have a plan. Instead, this is a government intent on mere self-promotion. For every dollar spent on government propaganda that is one less dollar to be spent in health care, to be spent in education, and for all the things that people need in their communities to succeed.

There is an old saying – and we have heard it all before – that self-praise is really no praise at all. So, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, people in Newfoundland and Labrador have seen enough of self-praise. Our Province does not need self-praise from any government. It needs strong management, long-term planning, and open and caring government. It needs a vision that offers something new; a vision that will underpin a strong plan to move forward as a people and as a Province; a feeling of hope, change, and new ideas. Newfoundland and Labrador needs a firm and a steady hand on the wheel, a sure and confident course ahead.

We know that the educational performance has a direct impact on not only education but on health care and economic performance. At a time when our children are underperforming in school – they are pushed through under this government's no-zero policy – we know that an education system that includes early learning and full-day Kindergarten is critical. Not only does it give our children the best possible start in life, but it is an investment in our future. It is our long-term success.

I am committed to a task force on improving educational outcomes. Working in consultation with our educators, the task force will examine the early learning through K-12 education systems to identify the areas for sensible, long-term improvements.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: In addition to this, we have made several other commitments as an Opposition: the seniors' advocacy office; the reinstatement of

the Family Violence Intervention Court; working with the municipalities to use Crown land for economic development; a Premier's forum on municipalities; campaign finance reform; a business investment tax credit; a youth entrepreneur retention program; and something – because I have said it before, taking the politics out of appointments, an independent appointments commission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, we have also introduced our vision for health care. We are committed to working with health care providers to improve outcomes throughout our system. We will not give up on our front-line health care professionals.

Our health care system today is oversubscribed and failing to meet the needs of people across the Province. We need to look at things differently and consider the best model for people at every stage of life. We need to consider the changing needs of our population and put action plans in place to address them.

When we talk about health, it is not just physical health. Mental health is just as important as physical health. We are committed to a provincial mental health strategy to address the growing need for appropriate resources, services, and support. I will say that my colleagues from the Third Party, the PMR that we were happy to support in this House and certainly proud to be part of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, that is what comes with working together I say, Mr. Speaker.

My colleagues across the floor, they also like some of the ideas that we put out there too. Just to name a few that have already been adopted, I have already talked about Bill 29. They endorsed it, they supported it, yet they are about to essentially repeal that piece of legislation. They resisted the call for the radiation facility in the new hospital in Corner Brook and the PET scanner. After the research of the Official Opposition, they changed their mind and have now accepted that. Full-day Kindergarten, Muskrat Falls oversight, student loan reform, a mental health strategy, five-year budgeting, multi-year infrastructure planning and tendering,

and after now twelve years in power finally this government – we called for this over ago – MHA pension reform.

Mr. Speaker, confidence and trust in government is vital to encouraging growth and sustaining prosperity for the future. When we look to the industries that have provided for the Province such as the fishery, agriculture, forestry, and small and medium-sized businesses, they tell us when we speak and meet with them they feel that they are left out fending for themselves. We see significant opportunities in these industries. What we need is a government that will work with them, not against them.

These have traditionally been areas that have driven the economy in our Province, especially in rural parts of our Province. We will not give up on rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, when you look north to Labrador and its vast natural resources, the people there tell us that this government takes them for granted. In the Speech from the Throne today, we heard talk of flying the Labrador flag. Well, I can say this is not a government that did that – they did it reluctantly, they resisted, and they refused to do it for quite some time.

I commend the people in Labrador who spearheaded that initiative to actually get the Labrador flag flying at the entry point in Labrador. We will ensure the people of Labrador share equally and fairly in those vast natural resources that contribute to the entire economy of our Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, we will build strong trust relationships with our Aboriginal partners throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, today's Speech from the Throne has given the people of Newfoundland and Labrador a lot to think about. The next step in our Province's journey needs to be led by a government that will listen first, then act, effectively manage risk and leverage

opportunities, and help move beyond today's challenges toward a better future.

The people of this Province deserve better management from a government. Mr. Speaker, make no mistake, we have little margin for error. From here on in we have to get it right. Every member of this Liberal team knows and believes that to be true.

There is a choice; bad management of the past, strong management for the future. The people of our Province are asking for strong management. They are asking for long-term planning. They need and are asking for an open and caring government. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are looking for hope, they are looking for change, and they are looking for new ideas. They are looking for a plan to help them reach their full potential.

I know people throughout our Province have listened intently today to the Throne Speech because they have felt the impacts of a government who did not manage and did not plan. People recognize that our next government will have an historic impact on our Province. They know and they deserve a government that will listen, plan, and manage. Something, after today's Throne Speech, clearly will not be realized with this current government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very happy to stand and make a very short response to the Speech from the Throne.

In the past six months, both the Premier and the Minister of Finance has warned us all, has warned every person in every nook and cranny of Newfoundland and Labrador of the dire fiscal situation in which the Province finds itself. They have warned us of the tough economic situation that we all face in Newfoundland and Labrador with no clear path forward, except a warning that things are going to get tougher,

except a warning of cuts, except a warning of shrinkage, except a warning that we are all to bear the brunt of this.

No direction in terms of who exactly will bear the brunt or how that will be bared. No exact idea of what that will mean in the day-to-day lives of individual citizens, of individual families, and of individual non-profit organizations and community groups that are doing incredibly vital work on behalf of the people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, what one would expect from the Speech from the Throne is a clear map on how we are going to weather this storm. It is a storm that we have been warned about. Not that perhaps this will happen, but that we are in the middle of it, that we are in the midst of it.

Really what one would hope from government is that there would be a plan and a way forward to show how we will not only survive, stay in place, or perhaps just move a little bit backward, but how we are going to move forward in spite of some of the very real economic challenges we face. We face them because some of them are out of our control when we look at what is happening on the international stage in terms of the price of oil. We know that this government has been addicted to oil at the cost of not developing other ways of sustaining our Province.

People are worried. People are afraid. We know that within the public sector people are afraid for their jobs. People are worried about how they will clothe their children, feed their children, pay their mortgages, pay their child care, and perhaps help their aging parents. Particularly, people in the public service are concerned about this because we know what happened in 2013 in the great cuts to public service.

In this Throne Speech one would hope that there would be a lot of reassurance. The words optimism are used a number of times in the Throne Speech, but one can only have optimism if it is based on reality, if it is based on a vision of something that will work and that will bring us forward. What is government doing to relieve some of the fear and some of the concern? What is government doing to instill

some confidence? It is confidence that has to be built on something that is real.

We know that the Budget is coming down in the not-too-distant future. Then, Mr. Speaker, that will reflect the vision of this government. The actual Budget with numbers associated to the needs and services of the people of the Province – that will tell us really what the vision of this government is. Not a Throne Speech that has platitudes and talks about optimism, but a Budget putting your money where your mouth is. It is our hope that the optimism that has been identified in this Throne Speech is based on a reality that will enable the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to not only just stay in place or keep their heads above water, but a Budget that will help people to thrive, a Budget that will help people to move forward.

People are asking how we are going to move forward in these times. We know, Mr. Speaker, that we have the highest percentage of seniors in the country who are in receipt of OAS and GIS. Which means we have the highest percentage of seniors in the country living under the poverty line or at the poverty line; seniors who are worried about their futures, seniors who want to live in their own homes or to live in rental accommodations, but do not know how they are going to be able to afford to do that, seniors who know that with a little bit of help, be it from home care or in other ways, they would be able to stay in their homes.

This Throne Speech has not talked about the reality of seniors lives, nor has this Throne Speech given us any indication as to how seniors and the needs of seniors – because we all know, we have all talked about it in this House, Mr. Speaker. We have all talked about the growing proportion of seniors in this Province. Again, we have one of the most rapidly growing proportion of seniors in the country in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our seniors are not victims. Our seniors are people who have worked hard all their lives to bring us to this point, to build the prosperity that we all experienced only a few years ago. These are people who need some concrete information about how they will be able to live fully, how they will be able to live safely, how they will be

able to live in dignity and respect in their senior years.

There is nothing in this Throne Speech that indicates the services they will need, be it affordable housing, be it home care, there is nothing in this Speech to reassure them. Perhaps we will see something in the Budget, but in this Throne Speech we see nothing concrete. We see no vision. Perhaps it is there – perhaps.

Young working families are telling us all over the Province that they need affordable, accessible child care. There is nothing in this Throne Speech that speaks to that. This is a very concrete need for young working families. It is also a concrete need for our seniors. How many seniors are taking care of the children of their children because their children cannot afford child care, so that people can work without worrying about how their children will be cared for. There is nothing in this Throne Speech that is concrete, that will allay the fears, that will allay the concerns. It has been told to us so clearly.

Everyone in this House knows how important child care is in both the economic success of our Province and is also perhaps one of the most fundamental underpinnings for population growth. How many times have we heard young working families cannot afford to have more than one child because they do not have access to affordable, reliable child care?

I want a Newfoundland and Labrador that is based on an optimism that is based on reality. It is very interesting to see the acknowledgement of the role of artists in our communities, particularly in the area of tourism; yet, we see nothing. We know we have among the lowest per capita funding for artists in the country. We see nothing. We see platitudes on praising our artists for the work they do in creating our culture and reflecting our culture back to us.

As a matter of fact, very early in the Throne Speech we see that this government is calling forth encouraging more people to write books, encouraging more people to record our culture, to record our history, but there is no indication in this Throne Speech whatsoever of how artists will be supported to do that. We have the highest number of artists living under the

poverty line, percentage wise, than anywhere else in the country. We praise the work they do and the influence they have on tourism, yet there is nothing concrete in this Throne Speech to show that yes, in fact, that they should have any optimism. Again, we will see what the Budget has in store.

We see there are some victories. Government has decided to not only reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court, but to expand it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: We see another victory in terms of the establishment of the all-party mental health committee. These, Mr. Speaker, are victories not only because of what we have done here in our House of Assembly, not only because of what we may have each and individually done as MHAs, but they are real meaningful victories because of real, meaningful civil engagement. People across the Province have spoken out loudly and clearly on what they see is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I feel entirely buoyed and optimistic not because of what I have seen specifically in the Throne Speech, but because I see and I think many of us see a resurgence of civil engagement, of activism, of people contacting us, of people of Newfoundland and Labrador saying we want to take back our Province, we want to be fully engaged in how our Province moves forward.

We see that in the incredible services that are delivered to us by community groups and non-profit groups all over the Province, and we are hearing from them again. There has been a few years where community groups and non-profit organizations have been afraid to speak out, have been afraid that if they were seen as contrary to government policy, or contrary to government, there was a fear. There was a chill in the air. We all know about that, a fear to speak out, a fear to criticize, and we are seeing a resurgence of that. That makes me optimistic. That buoys my optimism.

In health care, yes, we have seen that wait times have been reduced, and that is a good thing. I think there are many victories in our health care system and many ways that people can be proud,

many ways that government can be proud. They talk about the focus on primary health care. One would hope that also means a focus on primary health care clinics.

Again, it is one thing to talk about platitudes, it is one thing to talk ideas, but, Mr. Speaker, our optimism has to be grounded on concrete reality. We know from the consultations that have been done Province-wide, that one of the issues health care professionals, that the public have talked about is the need for primary health care clinics. So one would hope – again, we will see in the Budget what will be set aside.

Also, in health care; the incredible growing need for seniors in the area of care for seniors with dementia and Alzheimer's. We will see once again in the Budget whether or not this Speech from the Throne reflects something grounded in a reality.

Mental health; we can celebrate the fact that we have an all-party mental health committee that will hopefully inform a new mental health strategy, but this consultation process has to be genuine. It has to be long enough and thorough enough so that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly people who are users of the mental health system, whether it be individuals themselves or their families, or their health care providers, actually do have a chance to be heard by this all-party committee so that any recommendation, again, comes back based on reality, based on the information that people are dying to give us. It is not enough to do a precursory approach to consultation; it has to be based in real time and time for real dialogue.

I look forward to that, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to being part of that Committee where we will have the chance to really listen with the intention to hear. We have to get this right because it is so difficult for families across the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to close; I just have a few more issues that I would like to raise. It is heartening to see that there will be a recommitment to the Poverty Reduction Strategy. It was a strategy that was very progressive in its time, but seemed to have been abandoned over a period of a few years. So, I look forward to hearing what the 1,000 people

who were consulted had to say and how that will direct the new Poverty Reduction Strategy. Although there have been many great gains, we also know how difficult the lives are for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in different parts of the Province who live under the extreme mantel of poverty. I look forward to hearing what they had to say, and one would hope that will see a report that accurately reflects the challenges that people are facing in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, our Throne Speech is about values, values that are a foundation of sound decisions and good public policy. We will see if the values that may have been pointed to in the Throne Speech – we will see in the Budget whether this government puts its money where its mouth is. We will see whether or not there will be decisions based on putting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador first. We will see whether or not the Budget will help the people of the Province weather the storm that we have been warned about.

We need an approach to governance that is based on a determination that all our citizens, not just those at the top of a ladder, should be given a fighting chance to realize their dreams and aspirations. One will hope, Mr. Speaker, if the optimism that is reflected here in this Throne Speech is reflected in a Budget that is real, that is concrete, that will help the people living in poverty, that will help our seniors, that will help our working families, that will help students, that will help artists so that we can all fully participate in building a prosperous Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Honourable members of the House, I would like to join with my colleagues opposite in thanking the Lieutenant Governor for his eloquent delivery of the Speech from the Throne this afternoon. I also want to thank not only His Honour but also the judges of our courts; our civil leaders; leaders in business who joined us today; representatives from labour, academia;

church representatives that joined us here today; the community; cultural leaders; and also citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who have either tuned in through the House of Assembly broadcast or have joined us here in the House of Assembly for the Throne Speech today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank the movers and seconds of the motion this afternoon: the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale and also the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. I thank both of them for their very thoughtful words that they shared with us this afternoon.

I listened very carefully to them and they both spoke of investments that were made in their districts, investments that we, as a government, have made in their districts; but, more importantly, if you listened carefully to what both these members talked about this afternoon, they also talked about the impacts those investments are having on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They talked about it from a district perspective and they also talked about it from a provincial perspective, Mr. Speaker. I think it is very important words they brought this afternoon. I thank both of them for their well-thought-out comments this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the work we do as a government is very difficult and challenging on a daily basis. We would never be able to continue to do the work that we do if it were not for the support and the work that we do together as a team and as a caucus. I want to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation to all members of our caucus on this side of the House for their continued support, their unwavering support, of not only me but the ministers in our government who work on a daily basis for all people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We would not be able to do it without them. I thank all the members of our caucus for their support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, just a short time ago, we heard from

the Leader of the Opposition and also heard from the Member for St. John's Centre on behalf of the Third Party. I want to thank both of them for putting their thoughts forward this afternoon and sharing their thoughts with us.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to take some time today to take some issue with some of the comments that both the Leader of the Opposition, and somewhat to a lesser extent, the Member for St. John's Centre, in the comments they have made this afternoon because I have listened to their message.

I listen attentively to Members of the House of Assembly on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker. I am quite pleased in some sense because the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, this afternoon talked about that he is optimistic about the future. I say that is very much a contrast from what we are used to hearing from the Leader of the Opposition. We have heard him talk about Newfoundland and Labrador is the worst, the last, and the lowest. He has used those words. When he talks about Newfoundland and Labrador as the worst, the last, and the lowest he is talking about the people of our Province as the worst, the last, and lowest.

Mr. Speaker, that may be his belief and has been his belief in the past. That may be where he likes to position himself and that is where his thought process is, but I can tell you it is certainly not reality. It is not reality for me, it is not reality for us on this side of the House, and I know it is not reality for thousands and thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: It is also good, Mr. Speaker, to finally hear some ideas or concepts that the member opposite has because he has been staying silent. He stayed silent for many, many months. He has not been able to present a position.

It is very interesting this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, because if you listen to what he said, when he talked about plans and the future for this Province, it is exactly what we have been doing as a government for the last ten years. It is the

work that we have been doing for the people of the Province over the last ten years. Now he comes forward with the same ideas, the same concepts, and the same plans that we have been talking about for many, many years and we have been doing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for many, many years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, when we came to office – we came and took over government a decade ago – I can tell you the Province was a very different place than it is today. Thankfully, we are in a different place today than we were a decade ago. We have made advancements on so many measures and so many fronts.

We have advanced employment, Mr. Speaker, with higher levels of employment than we have seen before. That is a fact. We have done that. We have improved incomes. That is a fact. We have improved incomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We have unprecedented capital investment in our Province like we have never seen before. Retail sales are higher than they have ever been before, and that is a fact.

The economic activity in our Province is second to none. It is the strongest and best we have ever seen. Access to health care continues to improve by well-guided plans and hard work by our government over here. Access to education, and better education, we continue to work on and we continue to strive to make improvements on, Mr. Speaker, because that is what we are doing on this side of the House.

We continue to tackle child poverty. The Member for St. John's Centre referenced it a few minutes ago, and yes, we are still committed to poverty. We have made better gains in poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador than any other jurisdiction in Canada can say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: We have made significant improvements in the infrastructure in our Province. We know that ten years ago, Mr. Speaker, when we came to power that we had significant issues with infrastructure throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, infrastructure of

all kinds and all types. We have continued to build our infrastructure because that is what leads to sustainable communities in our Province. That is what leads to sustainable communities in rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and urban parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, in all regions. If you have strong infrastructure it allows for strong communities, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to build the infrastructure for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, we have continued to make progress on the access to broadband, and it is an important matter. It is important to provide those services to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we have invested millions. We have developed partnerships with business, with national business, with local business, so that we can advance broadband services throughout our Province. Mr. Speaker, we have made great gains as we have done this in openness and transparency, and in accountability. I am going to speak more about accountability because it is an important part of governance, a very important part.

Newfoundland and Labrador is simply light years ahead of where we were a decade ago, where we were in 2003. Mr. Speaker, for the Opposition party to justify a message to say otherwise is simply not acceptable. It is not acceptable, and I am not going to stand for it either, because we have done great things in this Province and we have invested heavily in this Province. Mr. Speaker, you will hear members opposite – and they have done it many times here in the House of Assembly – talk about, where is the money gone, what have they done. They talk about the \$20 billion in revenues have been squandered. Well, I am going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is simply not so.

Firstly, let's put this in perspective. A billion dollars a year of our oil revenues simply displaces, first and foremost, the billion dollars a year that the previous government was receiving from the federal government in equalization handouts. We no longer receive that, because under our watch we became a have province, Mr. Speaker. The first thing to go were those transfer payments from the federal government, those equalization payments.

Everyone can see where our revenue has been, where our revenue has gone, and where we have invested it, Mr. Speaker. Because today we have better health care – it is simply the truth. We know we have more work to do, Mr. Speaker. We have new and improved hospitals. We know we have made great improvements, but we have more work to do.

We have greater access to medical procedures than we have ever had before. Mr. Speaker, we still have work to do. We have a state-of-the-art cardiac care program right here in Newfoundland and Labrador that is being watched by cardiac care programs right throughout North America and is seen as the best available anywhere in Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: We provide dialysis services close to where people live, Mr. Speaker. Life sustaining dialysis services that are important to so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we have established more dialysis opportunities than we could ever have imagined a decade ago. We could never have imagined the advancements we were going to make in dialysis care so people can stay in their communities and receive this very much needed treatment.

We are nation leading in wait times, in wait time reductions. We have reduced wait times in hip and knee surgeries. One of the fastest growing demands in our health care service today is hip and knee replacements and we have lowered the wait times. We are now nation leading in wait times for hip and knee replacements.

Radiation treatments, Mr. Speaker, very important radiation treatments, we are leading the country in wait times. We have more long-term care than we have ever had before. We have more nurses working harder for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we have more doctors working in our Province than we have ever seen before, Mr. Speaker. That is progress, and that is doing work for the people of our Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Now, Mr. Speaker, I talk about nurses because I can tell you I have tremendous respect for the people who work in health care. I have tremendous respect for public servants who do the work of government on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that I sometimes get a little bit tired of hearing complaints from members opposite who day after day come in here in Question Period and put questions to us criticizing the work that public servants do. It is not that long ago –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

PREMIER DAVIS: Well, you do. You do, I say to the member opposite, you do it. You do it on a regular basis. It is not that long ago the Leader of the Opposition said, and I heard him say it because I watched it on TV when he said, yes, the nurses have to work harder. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not where I am because we get good value from our public servants. We get good value from those who work in health care, Mr. Speaker, and I have a lot of respect for nurses and the work that they do, and we need to work with them.

When we convened the Health Summit earlier this year we learned a lot. We are going to continue this work, Mr. Speaker, because we need to provide better health care to the people of the Province. We need to find more ways of doing that, and sometimes the best way to find the better way forward is to talk to the people who are on the ground, the people who deliver those services. Through the Health Summit, we convened 300 experts in a room in January, that was the discussion we had. We want to hear from them on how we provide those services and how we provide better services, and we are doing that, Mr. Speaker. That is the difference in us.

When you measure the difference in our party versus other parties, when the tough gets going, you know we are getting tough. We are going to make those decisions, Mr. Speaker, we are going to do it, and when we make those decisions some people start to: oh, wait now, we were not sure you were going to do that. I will give you some examples of that, because we have to make tough decisions.

Governing is not easy, Mr. Speaker. I am going to tell you, governing is not easy to do, but we are willing to make those hard decisions and we are going to do that. Every chance I get I will protect and defend the hardworking public servants that we are so blessed to have here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we have made great progress in this Province. We have done it through development of plans. Unlike what the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition wants to acknowledge, we have developed plans. We have brought forward plans, and then we put them to work. In partnership with our public service, I add again, Mr. Speaker. It is our public service that carries out the work on a day-to-day basis.

We have done great plans and great advancements in child care. We are continuing to do that through our ten-year plan. We have new and improved schools. We have them all over the Province, Mr. Speaker. We have improved curriculums. As I said earlier, we are not there yet. We still have work to do, but we have better curriculums today than we have had before as a Province.

We have better labs, free textbooks, the end of school fees. The best student aid program in the country and the lowest tuitions because of our investment of \$283 million that we have made since 2005 in Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, keeping them here, educating them here, so they can raise their families here and they can work here, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: We have invested \$6 billion in infrastructure. Now, Mr. Speaker, I ask members opposite, if that is squandering money, tell me what roads we should not have paved? Tell me what investments we should not have made in infrastructure. Go head. I ask them. Go ahead and do that, because they will not tell us. They will not tell us what school we should not have built or what hospital we should not have built, what health care facility we should not have built, what bridge we should not

have repaired, what roads we built, what roads we paved.

AN HON. MEMBER: Ferries.

PREMIER DAVIS: What ferries we built, absolutely. We made significant investments in ferry services.

Mr. Speaker, \$5 billion for Labrador; \$5 billion we have invested in Labrador. We have invested \$1 billion in poverty reduction. The member opposite, the Member for St. John's Centre referred to it and I am glad she did, because as I mentioned earlier, we are committed to poverty reduction. It is better for people. It is better for our Province. It gives people opportunity to be contributors to our society. That is what we need to do, and we are having great success in doing it, Mr. Speaker.

We put \$3 billion in debt reduction. Mr. Speaker, we took \$3 billion and we put it back in the pockets of taxpayers through tax reductions. That is what we did. We gave it back to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we have made equity investments that have increased our returns in offshore. It puts us at the table with the offshore companies so we can realize better returns for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, we are making investments to develop Muskrat Falls so we can supply our own people, so we can supply our own industries with low-cost power while providing surplus power that we can sell to markets outside our Province.

Mr. Speaker, that is about vision. That is about looking long term on what is going to be the best thing for Newfoundland and Labrador not only next year or in the next decade, but what is in the best interests of Newfoundland and Labrador for the next century because that is how long these power plants last.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: You heard through the Speech from the Throne in the last few months I

have met with other Premiers and I have had discussions about power. I have met with governors from the United States, New England governors, several of them, and have had discussions with them about power.

Mr. Speaker, they need a source of clean, green, renewable electricity and we have that source. Being able to provide such important power to markets outside of Newfoundland and Labrador to other parts of Canada and also in the United States is going to pay dividends to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for decades and decades to come.

I have talked in this House before about the Hoover Dam. We can picture the Hoover Dam. It is 725 feet above ground. It has been producing clean, green electricity for eighty years, Mr. Speaker. On the Churchill River in Labrador we have four times the power capacity of the Hoover Dam – four times. It is just waiting for us to develop it, for us to partner with the markets that need it, and create that benefit and wealth for Newfoundlanders in years to come. We are going to do that.

Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that at every turn and every corner if we talked about moving forward with Muskrat Falls, members opposite criticized us. They tore us down. They took us on about it. They doubted it. They said you should not do that project, it is the wrong decision, it is the wrong thing to do and you should not do it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we made those hard decisions. We did what was necessary for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They will benefit from this for years to come despite the criticisms from members opposite and despite the fact they fought us on this on every corner.

Now recently, Mr. Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Opposition say yes, I think it is a good project now. We have seen that from him before because he wants to do it, does not want to do it. I heard him recently saying that it is a good project. I am glad he feels that way. I hope he supports us as we continue to develop markets and the future for Labrador.

They have blocked us. Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, we have a vision and we have a plan.

We do have a plan and a vision for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Opposition party blocked us at every stage. The last thing they want us to do is to be successful.

We are being successful with Muskrat Falls. We are being successful with our renewable electricity where they failed. We are doing it when they could not, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about planning. He suggests and tries to say we have no plan. Our plan is obvious because we have been implementing our plan for a decade now. We have been implementing our work and our plan for a decade. Today, through the Speech, we have laid out more concrete elements of what our future is going to hold for us as a government.

I tell you we have stayed true to where we are. Yes, we have had our bumps in the road and we are going to have that. When you make hard decisions in your government you are going to have that, but, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue. We are going to continue to plan. We are going to continue to create that vision. In the coming days and through our Budget, the members opposite and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will learn more about our plan.

Today we heard a little bit about the Opposition's plan as I have talked about. They have been a long time developing it. It is really not a plan. It was a few ideas kicked around by the Leader of the Opposition there today, but they still have not come with their plan.

They stand here and criticize us on a daily basis. They do it here in the House of Assembly and they do it publicly, but at no time do they say here is the right thing to do. We do not think they have done the right thing. Here is the right thing to do. They never provide the alternative, Mr. Speaker. I encourage anybody when they speak to Members of the House of Assembly, if you do not like our plan, if someone from the House says we do not like what you are doing, then ask the person what is the right thing to do.

They have changed their course as they have gone along, Mr. Speaker. They have done that from time to time. We saw that through the House reform, the work that we are doing in reforming the House, Bill 42. First of all, the Leader of the Opposition was in favour of it and then within a few hours he said, well, he is not really in favour of it. We talked through the House of Assembly and we came to an agreement on a plan that we both agreed with. I was delighted because I believed it was the right thing to do.

MR. BALL: (Inaudible).

PREMIER DAVIS: We did work out a plan I say to the Leader of the Opposition. We talked, we worked through the House of Assembly through the debate in January that we had here on Bill 42, and we voted in favour of it, Mr. Speaker.

It was not long after that the members opposite were publicly talking about well, you know, I am really not sure if I should have voted for it. They were starting to move off it again, Mr. Speaker, if they should have or should not have. They started to move again. Now we hear rumblings that some of them over there may not be happy with what is happening now and they may be against it again. We will have to wait and see what is going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that when you make tough decisions, yes, you can move off your decisions. If you believe that you should do something differently or find a different way forward then you can do that, but be willing to stand up and say here is why I did it. Here is why I was where I was when I said that, when I took that position. I have learned something new. I have seen something different.

When things are not – you find a better way you should take that better way, Mr. Speaker. We do not know what their position is. There are so many matters in which we do not know what their position is because they have changed it so many times.

Mr. Speaker, there has been discussion today about openness and transparency. The Leader of the Opposition again raised openness and transparency and he talked a little bit about that.

I would just like to remind the people of the Province it was our government that proclaimed the act when we came into power in 2003 and yes –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

PREMIER DAVIS: Now just hang on over there. I just say to members opposite, relax. Relax, don't get too excited yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we did our review and we wanted to get it right. So we restarted the plan. We started a process that is going to bring us the best legislation in Canada. Clearly, it is going to bring us the best legislation in Canada.

Today, we heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about reforming campaign fundraising, fundraising reform. He mentioned that this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, he does not have to reform the law to be open and transparent on campaign funding. He can just lay it out if he wishes. He can lay it out. If he wants to lay out who supported him in his leadership, like we did on this side of the House, he can just go ahead and do it. He does not need law or legislation to do that. He can just go ahead and do that.

All the leadership candidates can do that. They do not need legislation to do it. We have done it. We have laid it out. We laid out who our supporters were.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: The Member for Mount Pearl North did it. I did it. Our other candidate did it, Mr. Speaker. We laid it out while they continue to speak out of both sides of their mouth. They said a few weeks ago – they had a big dinner up in Toronto.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: They had their \$10,000 a plate dinner up in Toronto and said oh yes, we are going to release who was there. We have not seen it yet. I have not seen it yet, Mr. Speaker. They should release their leadership contributions. So you cannot speak out of both sides of your mouth. If you are going to do what you say you are going to do, then do it.

When we talked about reform in the House of Assembly, members opposite said there are too many seats, we should reduce the number of seats. I said yes, well let's do it now. Hold on now, let's not do it now. Mr. Speaker, you cannot talk out of both sides of your mouth. You cannot.

Mr. Speaker, we are all quite aware that we have short-term challenges that are facing us, short-term economic and fiscal challenges. I know the members opposite are getting a little antsy, I guess they are not liking – we sat quietly over here as they spoke and presented their views, but they are getting a little antsy over there now.

Mr. Speaker, when oil dropped last year members opposite will have you think that the whole world saw that coming. Jurisdictions throughout Canada, Canada itself, and Newfoundland and Labrador are all being significantly impacted. Jurisdictions around the world are being significantly impacted by this unprecedented drop in oil.

Mr. Speaker, what is important to reflect upon, and what is important for us to remember is that as a Province we are still pulling our own weight. We are still a have province. We are still generating employment. We are still creating opportunities. We still have businesses that are thriving and hiring Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Our economy is still strong.

Mr. Speaker, those are the rewards that we are receiving from the diversification of our economy that we have begun to create throughout our Province. We have used our oil wealth to fuel non-renewable energy development. We have done that. We are succeeding, as I have mentioned, where others have failed in the past.

Muskrat Falls will become a legacy fund. It will become a legacy project for Newfoundland and

Labrador. It will become that, Mr. Speaker. When members opposite talk about – and not only members opposite, others have talked about why don't you do what Norway did? Why don't you do what Norway did when they created a legacy fund?

Mr. Speaker, Norway never had a legacy fund for the first twenty years of oil production. They never created that fund until they produced oil for twenty years. Now why was that? They produced 5 billion barrels of oil before they set up the legacy fund. Why did they do that? They needed to build their infrastructure. They needed to develop social programs. They needed to look after their people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: They needed to do the things that we have been doing over the last decade before they began to develop their fund, Mr. Speaker. We have our fund. It is underway. In many senses, in many respects, as I said, Muskrat Falls will yield billions of dollars in revenue for our people for generations to come. It will fuel growth and industry. It will drive the knowledge-based economy that is going to complete the transformation of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the future for us as a Province and that is where we need to go as a Province.

We need to fuel industry and business. The technology industry, Mr. Speaker – and I have used these words before so I apologize if I am repeating myself – is only limited by one's imagination. It is only limited by what someone can create and envision as a future opportunity. We have to keep it grounded right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we used to be, at one point in time, seen by many as Canada's poor sister. Today we are a national leader in so many fronts. We are a national leader throughout Canada and we are seen internationally as a leader as well. When we have countries come to visit us – we have industries that represent countries around the world that want to come here to see how we are doing business and how we are tackling problems, and more importantly, how we are finding solutions. That is what the future of Newfoundland and Labrador is all about. It is

about the future, and sometimes we have to look at the past.

Today, in the Speech from the Throne we referred to veterans. The Speech references veterans and our past, ordinary women and men who did extraordinary things. They did extraordinary things for Newfoundland and Labrador. I am sure if we could reel back the clock, Mr. Speaker, and ask them if they think for a moment that they are going to be having an impact on the people of our Province a century later they would never believe it, but they truly are.

Mr. Speaker, we heard about these people who existed a century ago. We have also heard today about people who very recently have put themselves on the line to help others in need. That is who we are as a Province. That is who we are as a people. That is the value we teach our children. It is one of our greatest strengths. I believe it is one of our greatest strengths that we are tapping into. We are going to build sustainable communities by the very strength of the people who live here and the people who raise their families here.

The real measure of a government's success, Mr. Speaker, is progress. After a decade of PC governance the truth is that the sick are better cared for, our children are better educated, families are better off, businesses are thriving, and opportunities are greater than they have ever been before.

Mr. Speaker, we are not done yet. I can tell you now we are not done yet. We have more work to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we have more work to do. I can tell you our party and our government remains committed to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Together we are going to continue to partner with the people of our Province and the businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador so Newfoundland and Labrador can be the best it will ever be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is it moved and seconded that a Select Committee be struck to draft an Address of Thanks to be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, in reply to the gracious Speech from the Throne with which he has been pleased to open the present session of the House of Assembly.

The members of the Select Committee will be the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, and the Member for St. John's South.

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.'

I declare the motion carried.

Continuing with government business: Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to table the following private member's motion:

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge government to establish a seniors' advocate office.

That is seconded by my colleague the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3) the private member's resolution just entered by the Member

for Conception Bay South will be the one debated tomorrow.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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