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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will be hearing members' statements from the Members representing the Districts of Port au Port, Trinity – Bay de Verde, Bonavista North, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Kilbride, and Torngat Mountains.

The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate the youth from the Stephenville High Duke of Edinburgh Program who received their bronze award on April 19.

The Duke of Edinburgh Program offers challenges in four categories: community service, physical fitness, skills development, and expeditions. Successfully completing this level is a remarkable achievement, and one to be proud of. It is certainly a program that develops the integrity of our youth.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the youth who were presented with the bronze Duke of Edinburgh's award.

This program is very strong and active in my district, and indeed in the Province, thanks to the dedication and commitment of the many parents and volunteers who work tirelessly to help make this program possible for our youth.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of the House of Assembly to join with me in congratulating our bronze achievers: Matthew Bennett, James Benoit, Christian Butt, Kipling Deeley, Julianna Deveau, Charlotte Elliott, Jordi Green, Olivia Henley, Kelly Hurley, Kameron Legge, Joshua Power, Mitchell Riberdy, Taylor Rideout, Jessica Skinner, John St. Croix, and Shane Taker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the organizers of the nineteenth annual North Shore Ambulance Telethon.

The North Shore Ambulance Service is located in Western Bay and consists of sixteen volunteers and employees. It services approximately 2,500 residents throughout eleven communities, from Kingston to Job's Cove.

The volunteers of this non-profit ambulance service raises funds every year to purchase medical supplies and updated equipment. The organization is now fundraising for the purchase of a new ambulance.

I was delighted to participate in the annual telethon which took place on Sunday, April 12 and was broadcast from Lower Island Cove. Residents in the area phoned in their pledges and approximately \$11,000 was raised for the service.

Volunteers play a vital role in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. At this time, I would like to thank the organizers for their countless hours of volunteer work, which makes this area a safer place to live.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating all volunteers, organizers and those who contributed for making the nineteenth annual North Shore Ambulance Telethon a tremendous success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: I am very proud to stand today to salute a very distinguished volunteer with the Royal Canadian Air Cadet organization.

Mr. Speaker, I will attend the Ceremonial Review and Annual Inspection of 840 Indian Bay Air Cadet Squadron at Centreville-Wareham-Trinity this coming Saturday, May 9. This year Captain Juanita Hoben will be sitting with the guests for the first time since 1983.

Captain Hoben began as a behind the scenes volunteer with this squadron when it began in 1974. In 1983 she was recruited to active leadership and began the role of Administrative Officer.

In 1993 she assumed the duty of Commanding Officer and continued in this fashion until this past February, when she reluctantly accepted mandatory retirement after thirty-two years. It is the efforts of leaders like Juanita Hoben that makes the Cadet movement what it is – energetic, disciplined and enlightening for the youth who enroll.

When Captain Hoben retired she handed the reigns to new Commanding Officer, Natasha Matchim, who started as a twelve-year-old cadet in this same squadron many years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to salute Juanita Hoben for her well-polished, tireless commitment and dedication to the youth of her region, our Province, and our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the tremendous accomplishments of the Pinware Karate School in the Labrador Straits.

Mr. Kevin Pike started the martial arts school in September 2010 and now has a yearly enrolment of approximately thirty students, ranging in age from seven to forty-eight. Mr. Pike has been involved in martial arts for more than thirty years and holds a black belt from Mike Foley Kenpo Karate School in St. John's.

In April of each year, the Labrador Open tournament is held. This is an opportunity for the karate students in the Labrador Straits to compete against clubs from Quebec.

In November 2014, ten students from the school aged thirteen to seventeen travelled to St. John's to compete in The Battle of the Rock. The team captured twenty-two medals, six of which were gold. This was the first opportunity for students from the Labrador Straits to compete at such a high level in karate. With Mr. Pike's determination and guidance, it will not be the last.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Mr. Pike and the Pinware Karate School on their outstanding contribution to martial arts in Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, on April 11, 2015, the Waterford Hospital Lions Club celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary. Most Lions Club members, their families and friends were there, as well as special guests and Leo Club members.

The Waterford Hospital Lions Club was started in April 1980, with its main aim to help patients and outpatients of the hospital. Working with staff and with Eastern Health, this group raises money to help those in need. They sponsor special programs at the Waterford as well as hold special events at special times of the year for their patients and outpatients.

After a good meal, special awards were presented. Liam O'Keefe, President of the Leo Club was on hand as the Leo Club was honoured for raising \$4,000 for the Lions Dog Guide Program. Hana Noseworthy was named the Leo of the Year; John Pearce, the present President of the club received special recognition for his ninth time holding the president's position; Michael Abbott received a District Governor's Award for his twenty-five years of service.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the Waterford Hospital Lions Club on its thirty-fifth anniversary.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the producers of *Them Days* magazine on their fortieth anniversary.

Them Days magazine was first produced in 1975 by the Labrador Heritage Society, and has been published quarterly ever since. From trapper tales to interviews with fishermen, the magazine has celebrated and remembered days gone by in Labrador.

Many claim that the magazine would not have been possible without Doris Saunders, the driving force behind *Them Days* for nearly thirty years. Her legacy lives on in the publication of the magazine that continues to this day with the help of many dedicated people in Labrador.

As part of the fortieth anniversary celebrations, *Them Days* will be publishing a special issue on the Labrador fishery in June called *Floaters, Stationers and Livyeres*.

Them Days is a cultural institution for Labrador – an institution that has been successful in capturing the history of the Big Land through the eyes and ears of Labradorians themselves. There are many stories yet to be told.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating *Them Days* magazine on their forty years in production, and I look forward to reading many more issues in the years ahead.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, delivering clean and safe drinking water to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador is a top priority for this government. The Department of Environment and Conservation works collaboratively with other departments, including the Departments of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, Health and Community Services, and Service NL, as well as with towns and communities, to ensure drinking water in the Province is clean, safe, and secure.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this hon. House today to discuss the most recent example of this collaborative approach to improving drinking water quality, which is the \$1 million Budget 2015 investment through the Community Sustainability Partnership.

Our government recognizes that smaller municipalities in particular need help operating the drinking water systems, as well as assistance in working with new federal wastewater regulations. This Budget 2015 investment will support three regional service boards, in collaboration with the Departments of Environment and Conservation, and Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, in providing regional water and wastewater operator services to an identified group of communities.

This 3.5 year pilot project will run from October 1, 2015 to March 31, 2019. Not only will it provide much-needed assistance to water system operators in the immediate term, but it will also help operators gain a stronger knowledge base and build capacity within communities for the ongoing maintenance of their systems.

To further assist communities in the area of clean and safe drinking water, we will engage a consultant to focus exclusively on solutions to reduce the number of boil water advisories. While boil water advisories are necessary to reduce the risk of water contamination and

protect our residents, many can be eliminated through proper operation and maintenance of community-owned water disinfection systems. This initiative will provide guidance to help communities, particularly those with recurring, long-term boil water advisories, identify what steps are required to correct the operational issues and have their advisories lifted.

Mr. Speaker, we are confident that these initiatives will go a long way towards improving the quality of drinking water in these identified communities. They build upon a host of other supports provided by government including training, reporting, and funding for capital works projects.

The provincial government is proud of this important Budget 2015 investment and we will continue to work with towns and communities toward the goal of ensuring the delivery of clean and safe drinking water to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Drinking Water Safety in Newfoundland and Labrador's Annual Report for 2014 reveals there are 219 active boil water advisories at year-end, impacting nearly 50,000 people in more than 150 communities. There are boil water advisories in this Province that are older than I am.

The Drinking Water Safety report reveals a staggering increase of unsatisfactory bacteriological samples. The coliforms are spiking up to 962 from 623 in 2010-2011, 132 cases of E.coli, and increasing levels of arsenic. That is a real problem.

The pilot project that the minister referenced as part of the municipal fiscal framework is not a

new idea. A similar program was proposed in 2003-2004, but the current government chose not to move forward on this.

Mr. Speaker, a pilot project is a step forward, allocating some money to implement a new approach to water treatment especially in rural areas where it is needed. The good thing about this is we can measure success. The more experts we hire the more regional services. We can ensure proper drinking water, but by announcing this pilot project to go for four years, it is just reprehensible without measuring the results in between.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister as well for the advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, the issues with small municipalities can be found in the monthly report on water quality issues in this Province. Simply put, they need money, money to hire and train operators for such things as chlorination systems. Small municipalities are also having a tough time getting help with funding for emergency repairs and pricey chemicals for these same chlorination systems.

Mr. Speaker, water issues should be dealt with now. This is not a new issue we are dealing with, and I think it is shameful that this government has decided to come out with another pilot project now when they have had such bad water in this Province for years now.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House today to recognize May as National Hemochromatosis Awareness Month. Hemochromatosis is a genetic disorder that causes the body to store excess iron. This month provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges faced by individuals and families dealing with this disorder.

People with this disorder absorb four times the amount of iron from a daily diet than the average individual. The human body cannot rid itself of this extra iron, and over time excesses build up in major organs such as the heart, liver, pancreas, joints, and pituitary gland. If extra iron is not removed, these organs can become diseased.

Mr. Speaker, if left untreated, hemochromatosis can be fatal. When undiagnosed, it can also increase the risk for diabetes, depression, infertility, various forms of cancer and other conditions.

Type 1 hemochromatosis is the most common form of hereditary hemochromatosis. Approximately 125,000 Canadians suffer from the disorder. Generating awareness to educate residents about the importance of screening for early detection is crucial to ensuring early diagnosis and effective treatment.

Residents who have questions, or who may have family history of hemochromatosis, are urged to seek more information by calling the Newfoundland and Labrador HealthLine at 1-888-709-2929. The HealthLine offers callers free 24/7 access to a registered nurse for health care information and symptom triage, and represents an annual provincial government investment of approximately \$3 million.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society is a registered non-profit organization founded in 1980 to raise public awareness to ensure early detection, testing and treatment in order to prevent suffering and premature death.

I commend the Society for its continued support and awareness efforts on behalf of Canadians living with this disorder. I urge all residents to visit the Society's website at www.toomuchiron.ca to become better educated on the importance of early detection and to gain

a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by so many across our country.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

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

We, too, in the Official Opposition want to help bring awareness to this disease. It is amazing when you think about the stats that one in nine Canadians carry the gene for hemochromatosis, but just because you are a carrier of the gene does not mean you will develop it. One in 300 Canadians are at risk of developing complications of this disease. While there is no cure, many complications can be prevented by early diagnosis and treatment.

The Canadian Hemochromatosis Society provides support and information to individuals and families affected by this disease. The society has a great source of information for those wishing learn to more. They provide information on the condition, diagnosis, testing, treatment options, and many more other area.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, we all have a responsibility to help increase awareness, and we are happy to do so today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. It is important to raise awareness of this serious genetic disease and the fact that untreated it can lead to chronic diseases such as diabetes and others, as have been outlined by the minister.

Primary health care teams across the country are providing better services in terms of screening, diagnosis, and disease management. If we had more primary health care clinic teams here, families with genetic disorders such as hemochromatosis would have better access to screening information and services they need.

I really encourage the government to do what was promised in the Throne Speech and reform primary health care and create more primary health care teams in our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize an event recently organized by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture to support a valuable part of our fishing industry – our harvesters.

On March 25, the department sponsored a one-day workshop for the under 40-foot vessel fleet that focused on vessel innovation and harvesting for quality. The event was organized with the assistance of the Marine Institute and the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board. Harvesters from throughout the Province travelled to the Marine Institute to take part in this worthwhile workshop.

Mr. Speaker, with reduced quotas, shorter seasons, higher operating costs, and crew shortages, there are a number of challenges facing the harvesting sector relating to current fleets and technology. The provincial government is proud to assist our industry in adjusting to these circumstances and capturing greater value for their investment. We will continue to support the development of this industry, especially during times of uncertainty.

In an industry as competitive as the fishery, the importance of striving for high-quality seafood products achieved through the most efficient and

safest manner possible cannot be stressed enough.

Our government is committed to working with harvesters to build a strong foundation upon which a rebounding groundfish sector can succeed. The workshop is designed to present the fleet with information on technology and best practices, while also seeking feedback from harvesters on their current status and state of readiness for the groundfish fishery of the future.

By engaging in a series of technical lectures and roundtable discussions, the department gathered valuable feedback from harvesters on a number of key topics. This information will prove incredibly valuable in identifying potential projects and various new technologies that can foster future success in the ground fishery. The \$1 million allotted in Budget 2015 for the Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program will enable the department to continue supporting such initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, this workshop provided the opportunity for department officials, researchers, and the Marine Institute to hear, directly from harvesters, what they feel they require in order to be successful as our Province's seafood industry experiences the coming shift from shellfish to groundfish. Ideas coming out of this workshop provided participants in the industry with information on potential upgrades to vessels which could lead to a more efficient, technologically advanced and less labour-intensive harvest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, this government continues to baffle me with their brilliance and self-praise. Quality is indeed a critical part of a fishing industry and after twelve years at the helm, I would have expected that this would have been accomplished by now.

Mr. Speaker, I guess there is not much for this government to talk about in the fisheries. We have seen a 56.8 per cent cut in the fisheries budget since 2012. We still do not have a seafood marketing council which was promised over five years ago. They sold off the marketing arm of FPI and another province is reaping all the benefits. They have failed to secure the fish fund associated with CETA. They have failed to secure joint management of our fisheries, not to mention custodial management.

Mr. Speaker, our fishery is too important to be left adrift like this government has been doing since 2005, and I look forward to a quality government that will alleviate our fisheries with vision, ideas, and investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I am glad to hear that the department is conducting workshops such as the one that the minister talked about, but I note that we need a lot more of this type of support for the small boat fishery in order to ensure that it is successful and sustainable for the sake of harvesters and their communities.

We do need work on getting ready to transfer back to a groundfish fishery, but we also need to explore new fisheries and pursue new markets. I would like to see workshops and training regarding safety, developing co-ops, provincial seafood marketing – this big promise that this government has been making for all the time I have been in this House – and work around developing strong local markets for fresh products.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, government revealed that 180 to 230 jobs would be cut in health care. This is on top of the 1,420 job cuts that were announced last week. This brings the total job cuts in this year's Budget to 1,600 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the Premier: Are there any other job cuts included in Budget 2015 that you have not disclosed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just before the Budget came down the early part of last week, I revealed an attrition plan for the core departments of government, together with boards and agencies, where we laid out a plan for some 1,400 positions to be eliminated over a five-year period through our attrition plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: We are going to do that throughout all departments and core agencies and boards.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I also indicated that we would be looking to various areas of our operation, core government departments, and boards and agencies. We will be looking at areas where we could have additional efficiencies. If we are able to achieve them then we would implement them. The 1,400 we announced were part of a core program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are aware of what the minister announced and what the Premier announced in last week's Budget. My question today, however, is that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – there was no full disclosure on the 180 to 230 job cuts.

My question to the Premier is: Are there any other job cuts in this year's Budget that you have not disclosed to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me pick up where I left off. Mr. Speaker, we were talking about how we plan to do business from here on in.

We have made a commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Through our five-year fiscal management plan, Mr. Speaker, we talk about moving forward with looking for other opportunities to create efficiencies, provide programs and services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that are sustainable in the long term, operating efficiently to ensure that the services Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need, they get it. They get it in a way that is sustainable well into the future.

We will be looking at each area of our operation, each board and agency that we have to see if there are other opportunities to make other improvements to make sure we create efficiencies and save some money, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know there are a total of 1,600 jobs now that they have finally publicly disclosed to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Minister of Finance one more time: Over and above the 1,600 job cuts that will be in Budget 2015, are there any other job cuts that you are aware of today that will be inflicted on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: What we intend to inflict on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, is a focus, a focus on ensuring that we have sustainable programs and services. We are going to engage anybody who works with us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: Any board and agency that is engaged in providing services to the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, they are going to be engaged in a process, Mr. Speaker, to sustain programs for the long term. They have been asked to look critically at how they do business.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: We want to be the most effective, most efficient delivery of public services of any jurisdiction in the entire country. If we are able to do that, to support programs and services for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, they will be here not just for today

–

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: – but well into the future and serve future generations. That is our commitment, and that is what we will inflict on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought I asked a question that the Minister of Finance, who is in control of the finances of this Province – and please stop the hide and seek government. Stop hiding the facts, stop seeking re-election. Are there any other job cuts in 2015?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: It is pretty disrespectful, Mr. Speaker, going on over there today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: I will rise above it, Mr. Speaker.

When we delivered our Budget, one of the things we talked about doing, Mr. Speaker, was an attrition plan. Unlike members opposite, we wanted to protect public servants in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: We rely on a delivery of services on a daily basis for Newfoundland and Labrador. We want to provide them with some assurance that we are going to protect them to the best of our ability, Mr. Speaker, instead of taking 1,000 or 2,000, like members opposite did back in the 1990s, and without any notice sent them packing and sent them to the curb. We did not want to do that, Mr. Speaker, we want to protect them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: And we are doing it through attrition, Mr. Speaker. Attrition means when people retire and leave public service on their own accord that we will replace eight out of every ten who leave. It is a method to reduce public service without shocking the system. It allows for us to employ new Newfoundlanders and Labradorians into the service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe the Premier will answer the question, and I will say it again: 1,420 by attrition, you have already said that, you have explained that; 180 to 230 extra that you did not fully disclose to the people of the Province until yesterday.

I ask the Premier: Are you aware of any other job cuts? Do you plan any more job cuts in Budget 2015?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the member opposite is referring to was announced in the Budget. I am going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, we are going to try to make efforts to find efficiencies in government at any chance we can. If we can find a way to create more effective and efficient delivery of services for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we are going to do that. That is our responsibility as a government.

We announced it in the Budget, Mr. Speaker, but we also announced an attrition plan so that we can keep our young, newer employees in the jobs –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – so we do not send them home; we do not send them to the curb; and we can continue to hire new employees not only this

year, but next year and the year after that and the year after that and so on because we want to continue to hire Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

If members insist on interrupting the other member as they are responding to question, then I will stand. There is only twenty-five minutes in Question Period. If you want to use it up by interrupting and interrupting, I will stand until there is silence in the House and we can hear the response.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 180 to 230 jobs cuts in health care are said to be in administrative services.

I ask the Premier: Given that this is a very general statement, what specific services will be cut?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we are going to review services, as I mentioned, and as the information becomes available to us we will make those decisions in the best interests of the public service. We will make those decisions in the best interests of the services and programs we provide. We will make those decisions in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Until we get to that point of making those decisions, I am not going to try to prejudge the possible outcomes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With all due respect, Premier, and to the people who are doing these jobs right now, you announced this yesterday. You announced 180 to 230 jobs, so you are telling me that you have not done the research on those positions and you cannot tell me specifically where those jobs are being cut?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: That is right, Mr. Speaker; the member opposite has the information. He just quoted himself in his preamble to his question. He knows there is a range available. We will look at what is being applied to that range, what is being recommended as efficiencies, Mr. Speaker, and then we will make those decisions. We will do that in concert with our partners.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is concern in the health care sector that these cuts will involve information technology services. In many areas these professionals work directly with physicians and other health care professionals.

I ask the Premier: Will these cuts include IT professionals who work directly on medical programs in our hospitals?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the consolidation of back-office functions within our health care bodies will not impact service delivery and the quality of health care services in any way, shape or form. We are finding logical efficiencies, Mr. Speaker, by consolidating the functions that I

referred to yesterday. I outlined them clearly, including information technology that the member is now asking about.

For people who are involved in technology directly related to delivering health care services, that of course will continue, Mr. Speaker. What we are talking about consolidating are administrative back-office functions to save taxpayers money, to find efficiencies, and to make the health care system better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, what we know is that many of those IT professionals actually help support physicians and lots of other health care professionals in our Province right now.

Just for clarification from the minister: Are you certain today that this will not impact and these are not people who are working directly with our physicians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition refers to what we are doing as cuts and I am obviously not surprised to hear him categorize it that way, but what we are doing is finding efficiencies. We are streamlining services. We are consolidating four HR departments within the four regional health authorities and also the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information.

We have four, plus the infrastructure we have in place at the centre. There is an opportunity to do things better. There is an opportunity to do things more efficiently. We will not impact front-line services. We will not impact patient care in any way as a result of consolidating administrative functions, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When Nova Scotia planned to merge health care administrative services in 2012, they had two years of prior discussions with health authorities and with government.

I ask the Premier: Did you do any discussions with the health authorities; if so, when did those discussions start?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we have been in discussions with the four regional health authorities for at least two years on this very issue. We have been constantly looking at ways to bring the health authorities closer together, to work together and to collaborate, and, in some cases, to consolidate services when and where it makes sense to do so. In fact, we engaged a third-party consultant a couple of years ago to assist us in that very work.

Deloitte, a firm that members opposite would be very familiar with, has done a lot of work for us in identifying potential models for shared services. I can assure you that people within each of the regional health authorities have been actively involved in that discussion over the last couple of years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: What evidence do you have on those potential savings in our Province? Will you table the results of that evidence in this House of Assembly?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that we have taken time to study this extensively. We want to do the right thing to make the health care system more efficient and to deliver better quality care. By doing this, we are going to allow the health care authorities to do what they are intended to do, which is focus on providing care to patients by consolidating and removing some of those back office functions, and delivering those services in a more efficient, focused way.

I am happy to table whatever information I can, Mr. Speaker, to answer the Leader of the Opposition's question. We have done the research. We have not only studied what is happening right across the country, but we have looked to other countries as well to figure out what model might make best sense here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2015 a new landing fee of \$40 was imposed on all landings at Labrador airstrips without consultation with the service provider or users. Then the minister said in the media he is meeting with at least one of those companies on Friday to review the decision, a classic case of tax now and consult later.

I ask the minister: Why did you fail to consult with the service providers and the people before you imposed this tax?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I first have to correct the hon. member over there. I never said that we would review dropping the tax. What I said from the proponent was they wanted to have a meeting to talk about how we could better improve the services in Labrador. Mr. Speaker, that meeting will take place on Friday with this proponent.

Mr. Speaker, what we have been doing in Labrador is we have engaged a process there where there is additional costing around overtime because of the scheduling of flights and ensuring that we have people available on the ground to make sure flights, be it medevacs, be it the air travel in the area is taken care of. We have also endeavoured, because we have had some challenges up there with the Northern climate, to ensure that our facilities have water and washroom facilities year-round. We have invested tens of thousands of dollars to ensure that, and we will continue to do that with these fees.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a lot of confusion over there because the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs this morning indicated to us that the implementation of this regressive tax is being reviewed with the Minister of Transportation and Works.

I ask the minister: Has the final decision been made on this landing fee as indicated in their Budget, or is it open for review or repeal?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to still make it clear here, this is about improving the services in Labrador. These are the only airstrips in Newfoundland and Labrador that do not have a landing fee. We have imposed that so we can continue to improve the ability up there for landing flights up there.

Mr. Speaker, particularly around our terminals, we want to improve our terminals. We spend over \$2 million a year on those airstrips. We want to make sure the services there are attractive enough for the airlines to continue

flying there, and that people have the amenities they need when they go to take a flight anywhere in this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, the airstrips in operation in Northern Labrador have been there for thirty years, and the only thing that has been done is gravel on them and the paint in the building itself. I fail to see where the government is going with this tax, other than to tax the people on an already expensive airline that it takes to operate.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will clarify again where this tax will be invested for the people of Labrador. We have problems with washrooms because of the freeze up with water and the extreme cold up there. An average toilet would cost \$100-\$125.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: We are bringing in \$5,000 non-water chemical toilets, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that people have those amenities –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – people have those basic services. We want to ensure that. So no matter what the climate is, people would have the same services in Cartwright, in Nain as they would have in St. John's or Deer Lake or Gander. That is how this Administration works for the people in all parts of our Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, Budget 2015 has followed by the disturbing trend of government cutting funding for the fishery. In last week's Budget, Fisheries and Aquaculture was allocated \$8 million less than what was projected. In 2014, government left \$4 million on the table from a projected budget of just over \$29 million. Since 2012, the fisheries budget has been slashed by over 56 per cent.

I ask the minister: What kind of future are you offering harvesters and plant workers when the only clear plan from this government is to diminish the fishery dollar by dollar?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, no other government in the history of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has invested in the fishery like this government has.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, just two or three hours ago the Premier and I went down to the harbour front here aboard the *Celtic Explorer* – a research vessel that is doing research off the Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador for the fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador, for the fish harvesters of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have been doing it for five years. The research vessel, as an example of one of our investments, has provided great research and that research will be used as we move the fishery forward in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question.

As for what they did on the waterfront today, that is something the minister has no control over whatsoever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, the lack of investment in our fishery, it can be seen in many, many areas and places around this Province. This government has failed repeatedly to promote a clear market strategy for our seafood. A new 2015 cod report states, Newfoundland and Labrador cod has to target specific customers who will pay a premium price.

I ask the minister: What happened to your original commitment to create a seafood marketing council, and why is there still no clear strategy to help Newfoundland and Labrador seafood compete on the global market?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, if I just heard something properly that the hon. member across says that the fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador are not competing on the global market. If I heard that, is that the direction the Opposition want to take the fisheries in the Province?

Our fisheries, our harvesters, our companies, inshore and offshore in marketing, inshore and offshore, our fish products are competing with the world's best, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in the fishery. We will

continue to invest this year and next year and the years to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish the member had the same vigour for the hospital in Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House, when asked about the \$9.6 million for the Corner Brook hospital, the minister stated it was for construction of the hospital but offered no details.

I ask the minister: What construction will take place on this hospital site this year, and when will the tender be called for this work?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I can assure the member opposite that the most passionate advocate and champion that I have come across for the new West Coast hospital facility in Corner Brook is the Member for Humber West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: He has consistently advocated within caucus, within Cabinet. He has advocated loudly and consistently on behalf of the people of the West Coast of the Province and I commend him for doing so, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: The only reason I was unable to not provide the full detail yesterday to the member opposite is that we were at the end of Question Period. I am happy to let him know that the funding will be used to continue the design of the acute care facility, and there are a

number of aspects of site work as well that I am happy to elaborate on.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I can see he might advocate, but obviously no one in that government is listening to him.

Mr. Speaker, when the P3 was announced – the long-term care facility in Corner Brook – the Premier said it would mean a savings of 20 per cent. The next day the Minister of Health said it would be between 10 per cent and 20 per cent. Obviously, no cost analysis has been completed on this hastily announced project.

I ask the Premier: Before any decision is made, will you table all financial analysis of this ill-advised project?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, hopefully in the days – maybe even weeks, it might take months – we will find out where the Liberal Party stands on the involvement of private sector and non-profit sector in long-term care, which, by the way, has been going on in this Province for decades. It works. We have seen it work in our own jurisdiction.

We have consulted with other jurisdictions. We have looked at what is happening across the country and there is private sector involvement or non-profit sector involvement in every other jurisdiction, in every other province in Canada. The savings has ranged between 10 per cent and 20 per cent. We know today, based on our own experience with a private operator here in St. John's, that the savings is approximately 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Wellness Plan Phase 1 is dated 2006-2008. The Premier has mandated Phase 2 of the plan and we heard it mentioned in the recent Throne Speech. Yet, healthy aging, mental health, health protection, and environmental health were given token mention in last week's Budget.

I ask the minister: When can we expect to see Phase 2 of the Provincial Wellness Plan?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the hon. member in Estimates last night, the many initiatives we have undertaken around wellness. Look where we have come and the programs that we invest in smoking, programs that we invest in healthy eating, and the many programs we have outlined that are targeting our youth within the schools.

I indicated to him I am not about to give an exact date, Mr. Speaker. We continue to work on that plan. When it is ready for announcement, I will probably give him a call and let him know first.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, I asked the question in February in a meeting and it was soon. I asked it last night and it was soon. So we have a different definition of soon.

We talk about a lot of programs, Mr. Speaker, but what about the results? Three of the wellness priorities identified in 2006 were healthy eating, smoking, and physical activity. Recently, in 2015, nine years later, the Conference Board of Canada ranked Newfoundland and Labrador the lowest in Canada on its health report, noting the same concerns: obesity and smoking still impact our health.

I ask the minister: Why are we still the lowest in the country in these statistics, given that we have been following another one of your plans for nine years?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, any time you go to a meeting and the stats are put up to that effect it is bothersome; there is no doubt about it. I have faith in the people of the Province; I truly do. This is not a phenomenon that is unique to Newfoundland and Labrador. It is persistent across Canada. It is persistent throughout North America, Mr. Speaker.

The initiatives that we will undertake – for example, this year we are investing \$500,000 to target youth. That is part of that overall initiative, and I do believe that all of us working together as a Province will improve upon that stat, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

Last week the Premier said he had not done the math on his bid to develop private-public partnership deals on long-term care for seniors in our Province.

So, I ask the Premier how he could announce a program without first doing the math.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Health just laid that out for this hon. House, but I will be quite pleased to do it again.

We looked at examples across the country, Mr. Speaker. We know our own example right here in this Province of partnering with private business and not-for-profit in the delivery of

programs and services is an effective way of delivering of programs. We do it in personal care homes, Mr. Speaker. We do it with pharmacists.

Local family doctors, quite often, are private businesses that deliver services and programs that are paid for by government, Mr. Speaker. There are examples across the country as well. There are very successful projects with long-term care in Canada, plans that have worked very good and provide a high quality of service.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to providing more effective, more efficient services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

He knows all about it in his terms, but he still does not know how much it is going to cost. That is wonderful.

Last week, the government announced 1,420 government jobs to be lost by attrition then the Health Minister announced approximately 200 positions will be cut because of amalgamation of aspects of the health boards.

I ask the Premier: Has he done the math on how many job cuts are hidden in the government's privatization plans?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In her first preamble and the comment that she made there, what happens – I will explain to the member opposite and I am sure she knows this –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – is that when you go through a competitive process then you rely on the proponents and the people who are interested in that process. Across the country we have seen, as the Minister of Health stated just a few moments ago, that between 10 per cent and 20 per cent reduced cost when the private sector –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – or not-for-profits are involved in the delivery of long-term care homes versus when governments do it themselves, so between 10 per cent and 20 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to build 360 new beds – 360 new long-term care beds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Some in Western, some in the Gander area, some in the Grand Falls area, and some here on the Northeast Avalon. Mr. Speaker, in doing so, we are going to create 450 new health care jobs right here in our Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: How far is he planning to go with the privatization of public services when it is proven that it leads to loss of jobs and a decline in services?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the first thing that is going to happen is that when the construction begins on these we are going to create construction jobs, not just here on the Northeast Avalon but also in Central, in the Gander area, in the Grand Falls area, and in Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: They are going to create construction jobs – good paying construction jobs.

The next thing that is going to happen when they open, they need professional staff to staff those facilities. What is going to happen then is we are going to hire 450 new health care providers in the system throughout the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: We did not lay off hundreds of people during our Budget, Mr. Speaker. We are creating an attrition plan.

Mr. Speaker, we respect workers in this Province. We want to create jobs in this Province. That is what we are doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday when talking about the new Waterford Hospital the minister said: I can assure you when the Province's fiscal position improves, the work required to complete the design will be done and we will be looking at ways to do it cheaper and faster.

I ask the minister: When exactly will this be and how exactly is he going to do it cheaper and faster?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we remain very much committed to replacing the Waterford Hospital infrastructure, which is terribly outdated. It has been in existence since sometime in the 1850s, I believe. It is infrastructure that desperately needs to be upgraded.

We have other health care infrastructure in this region and across the Province that is in need of upgrading as well. We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars and we will continue to do so.

As soon as the Province's fiscal situation improves, this initiative remains a top priority. The master plan and the functional program and the other work that has been done to date will be extremely valuable, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre has time for a very quick question.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Is he aware that P3 hospitals in Ontario and Quebec have experienced massive cost overruns, costing governments billions of dollars extra?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, for a quick reply.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, there is just as much evidence out there to show all kinds of success in terms of public-private partnership in health care and in other areas. We are looking at all of that to see if there are ways that we can do things better here in Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to give notice and ask leave of the House for the following motion: That the Member for Humber East replace the Member for St. John's North as the member of the Social Services Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the Member for Humber East replace the Member for St. John's North as a member of the Social Services Committee.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you.

That is good.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS there is no cellphone service in the Town of Trout River, which is an enclave community in Gros Morne National Park; and

WHEREAS visitors to Gros Morne National Park, more than 100,000 annually, expect to communicate by cellphone when they visit the park; and

WHEREAS cellphone service has become a very important aspect of everyday living for residents; and

WHEREAS cellphone service is an essential safety tool for visitors and residents; and

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to partner with the private sector to extend cellphone coverage throughout Gros Morne National Park, and the enclave community of Trout River.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have been presenting this petition on an ongoing basis. This is a new one from yesterday, and I think that this one would best be referred maybe as the Budget petition because some of the ink is blue and some of the ink is red. Three people have signed it in red, three people have signed it in blue, and somebody else signed it in black. So it looks like this would have to be the Budget petition for cellphone coverage in Trout River and in Gros Morne National Park. It looks like some borrowing, some deficit, and a little bit of an increase in spending. That is where the government has gone in its Budget this year.

This lack of cellphone coverage or any cellphone service throughout this area of Gros Morne National Park, and in particular, the Town of Trout of River is quite unfortunate. It is symptomatic of how this government has tended to govern. They do some things here and some things there without being particularly coordinated, without necessarily getting the best bang for the buck, so to speak. You never know for sure if they are going to do something and if they are going to do it, where it will be done, whether it will be on time, whether it will be on budget, or whether it will be over budget, or

whether it will be done properly, whether it will be completed, or like the Confederation Building, incomplete.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of the Town of Trout River and Gros Morne National Park generally would really appreciate some consideration that the government of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador would partner with the private sector as it is standing by and readily available to push forward with cellphone service in the park and extend that service to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are deeply concerned and scared for our aged and disabled who require long-term care now or in the future; and

WHEREAS our government and politicians have and continue to ask us for our input on decisions, needs, and quality of life. Now is the time to listen; and

WHEREAS privatization of long-term care, that is publicly-funded beds operated by for-profit facilities, will undoubtedly create deterioration in quality of care and working conditions in the facilities. Private companies will have to make a profit; their shareholders will demand it. The possibilities of reduced staffing or increased user fees are high; and

WHEREAS we need your commitment to ensure proper care and protection for our most vulnerable citizens. We need your commitment to our proud tradition of caring for each other;

WHEREUPON we the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to retain control

and funding for not-for-profit long-term care in this Province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have this petition here that was presented to me. It was actually initiated by a group of seniors on Gisborne Place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: It was initiated by a group of seniors on Gisborne Place which is in Southbrook, currently in the electoral District of Kilbride, and possibly the new District of Mount Pearl – Southlands if the boundaries go through, and they asked me to present this. As I said, it was totally initiated by them. We have signatures here from numerous people on Gisborne Place and other people in St. John's, the Goulds, and Petty Harbour and so on.

Mr. Speaker, these people are primarily senior citizens, and they were very concerned when the Premier and this government floated the balloon on privatizing health care, privatizing long-term care. These are people who, at some point in time, may possibly have to avail of those services and they are really concerned. They are really concerned that when the time comes, if they require these services, that because of privatization they are going to see reduced services and they will not receive the care they require.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about people here, we are talking about our parents, we are talking about our grandparents, and we are talking about senior citizens, people who have worked their whole life paying taxes. They are at a point now where they want to have assurances that should they require long-term care or other health care services, that those services are going to be provided to them.

So, I present this on their behalf.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay is in deplorable condition and requires immediate upgrading; and

WHEREAS the condition of the highway is causing undue damage to vehicles using the highway and is a safety hazard for the travelling public; and

WHEREAS both residential and commercial traffic has increased dramatically with the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway and increased development in Labrador; and

WHEREAS cold patching is no longer adequate as a means of repair;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately allocate resources to Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay that allows for permanent resurfacing of the highway.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, every weekend when I go back to the district I am just amazed in a new way at the deplorable condition of the road. For anyone who follows me on Twitter, they saw an incident that I had again last weekend. The entire tire completely off the rim, but it is not me that I am standing here for.

This is not a nice to do, this is an absolute essential must do, Mr. Speaker. I am absolutely shocked that nobody has been killed on that seventy-six kilometre stretch of road – probably about thirty-five, forty kilometres that is very deplorable. If the life of pavement is twenty years old, then this stretch of highway that I am talking about is decades past its expiration date – decades.

Mr. Speaker, I understand there is a batch plant being set up in Red Bay this summer. What a golden opportunity to get some new pavement up in the Labrador Straits area. Ambulances are driving this road; school buses.

I heard when I was back in the district this weekend there were seven tractor-trailer loads last season of cold patch that went into the area. Easter weekend, I think they put out two-and-a-half tractor-trailer loads of cold patch. They paid double and a half time to do it, which is absolutely ridiculous.

There are places now where you cannot tell what is road, what is parking lot, what is gravel. It is an atrocious mess. It is a very, very serious threat to safety.

I think about, Mr. Speaker, we are moving into the tourism season again. The people who will be driving the road are not familiar with where the huge holes are, very sharp, jagged holes. It is just a matter of time and somebody will be killed, possibly more than one.

I encourage the minister to go up and have a look at what we are driving on in the Labrador Straits on Route 510.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition to present on health care in the Bay St. George South area.

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

WHEREAS there has not been a permanent doctor at the clinic in Jeffrey's for almost a year; and

WHEREAS this absence of a permanent doctor is seriously compromising the health care of people who live in the Heatherton to Highlands area and causing them undue hardship; and

WHEREAS the absence of a doctor or nurse practitioner in the area leaves seniors without a consistency and quality of care which is necessary for their continued good health;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take action which will result in a permanent doctor or other arrangements to improve the health care services in the Heatherton to Highlands area.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that this situation in the community of Jeffrey's and the neighbouring communities has been allowed to exist for such a long time certainly shows there is something wrong with the way things are being done at the present. In the neighbouring community of St. George's, they have been without a doctor for close to six months now.

It is a serious problem when the basic health care services of a doctor or a nurse practitioner are not present in a community. It leads to additional problems, as people are not getting their tests in time from serious illnesses that they have.

Mr. Speaker, it is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. I am going to continue to present petitions on this topic until this government addresses the issue of the absence of doctors or nurse practitioners in these communities because it is a serious matter.

What needs to happen, Mr. Speaker, is we have to have a long-term human resources plan in this Province. We have asked the government to put such a plan in place and to release it to the public, to let people know what they are doing to address situations like this.

We have not seen such a health care plan yet. I am hopeful we will sometime soon and I am hopeful that this situation in Jeffrey's and St. George's, and indeed the impacts that it has on the hospital in Stephenville, will soon be addressed, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all before we get into the Order Paper, I would like to do a reminder for –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would just to like to do a reminder for members who are involved with our Estimates review that this afternoon the Government Services Committee will be reviewing the Department of Transportation and Works here in the House. Tomorrow morning as well, the Government Services Committee will be reviewing the Government Purchasing Agency; and tomorrow afternoon, the Social Services Committee will be reviewing the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services Estimates.

So that is a reminder for members. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government: the Budget Speech.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion 1.

I go to the Member for Virginia Waters to continue with her debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting that the Premier was using the announcement he made about the privatization of long-term care as a justification to – his words were to add 450 health care jobs. I certainly hope he is listening

to the petitions from the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East around the need to have a comprehensive health care staffing strategy; because this government has not been able to staff its own long-term care facility and it still has beds in that facility in Pleasantville that they planned to build four years ago empty, not servicing the seniors in our Province, not there to provide health care and, quite frankly, they still are unable to staff.

I certainly hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier, this particular Tory Premier, has higher standards and expectations around staffing models than that result.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I finished off, the House closed, I was speaking about the Residential Energy Rebate. Today I would like to speak about the personal income tax that the minister made as part of his Budget Speech. He said, "Effective July 1, 2015, to make the province's Personal Income Tax system more progressive, we are adding a fourth bracket for taxable income"

Mr. Speaker, with the crisis we have in our Province around jobs and reasons for people to stay in our Province, the need to have personal income tax be competitive is critical. What we need is a commitment – which the Liberal Party is committed to do – to a full review of the Province's finances which would include a proper tax review; quite frankly, something that has not been done in years.

It is critical that we remain competitive if we want to position ourselves as a place to live and work, to grow our population, and to get more people working. Because, quite frankly, we need to grow our tax base and not have a shrinking one. Fostering and growing that potential is a part of the Liberal vision for jobs and growth. We need jobs here to have people here.

Mr. Speaker, the minister went on to talk about fees. He said, "A number of fees changes will either increase some existing fees or implement a limited number of new ones." Mr. Speaker, the increases in fees has been described by members of the public as the death by 1,000 increases.

One example of the new fees that this government wants to put in are security system fees; security systems for seniors in their homes, single women, single men in their homes whose security alarm can be activated by things like the wind blowing at a storm door will generate a bill for these seniors. What is even more unbelievable is that government would announce a fee that it has no idea who is going to collect it, how it is going to be collected, and who is going to handle the administration of the fee.

Mr. Speaker, the most important revenue measure that this government choose to announce as part of its Budget was the HST, and the minister said, "One of our key commitments is to maintain a competitive tax regime that supports economic growth." "The fairest means of raising additional revenue to compensate for low oil prices is through the Harmonized Sales Tax System. It is broadly based, so the burden is distributed over the entire population base."

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Finance and the Premier if they have not heard about the economic phenomena called Abenomics. Many on the opposite side of the House, I am sure, have heard of Reaganomics and other economic policies. There is a well-known economic policy referred to as Abenomics. It is actually the flawed fiscal policy of raising value-added tax at a time when an economy is contracting. Not only did this minister not refer to it, but his own research and his own information in the forecast for the economy described an example of Abenomics.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals do not support an increase of the HST at this point quite simply because it forces the people of the Province to pay for Tory mismanagement. We intend to roll back any increase to the HST. This government is taking more from families at a time when they are under pressure rather than deal with their systemic spending problem. Government is attempting to pay for their mismanagement, quite frankly, by taking more monies from families and seniors and individuals in this Province, which is reprehensible.

The Premier committed to making housing more affordable for young people. During his platform last year when he was offering himself to the 300 people who selected him as the

Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, about 320, 350 people in that range?

AN HON. MEMBER: I thought they tied.

MS C. BENNETT: Oh right, sorry, there was a tie. There was a tie and it went to a third ballot. You are right.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier in his leadership bid said he wanted to create a program that would provide payment assistance to first-time homebuyers. In essence, what his first sweeping revenue idea is, is to implement a HST, a value-added tax that will prevent and impede young people's ability to buy a new home in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, government has failed to manage expenses and diversify revenue. That is the issue we have today. They have failed to diversify revenue, and now their failure forces them to turn to the people of the Province to take more out of their pockets to pay for this mismanagement. An increase in HST and other consumption taxes at a time when our economy is in decline is quite simply bad economics.

Mr. Speaker, we need to employ a long-term strategic view that allows us to remain competitive and be best positioned as a good place to do business, and, more importantly, for those businesses to provide jobs for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Part of that has to be a comprehensive review of the tax system. As I said earlier, there has not been one done in years.

We need to make it easier, not more difficult, for young people and young families to live here. The HST increase will only leave the people of this Province to pay for the Tories mismanagement of \$20 billion of oil royalties.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's Budget materials include a history of surpluses and deficits. I would encourage those people who are listening at home to take a look at the chart that is in the minister's own Budget information. The chart of surpluses and deficits from 1990 to 2020, and look at the history of this government during a period of time when our Province, when hardworking Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians, when investors worked hard to develop the oil industry, trade oil royalties for our Province, look at this government's track record when they had \$20 billion in oil royalties, \$5 billion worth of Atlantic Accord money, and see if those surplus and deficit numbers are ones that you would be satisfied with.

Mr. Speaker, also in the minister's Budget material is a chart that references oil revenue and assumptions. As many people in this House should know, certainly on that side of the House, I know on this side of the House we certainly understand it, oil revenue assumptions that the Province makes as part of their budgeting process to build to the oil royalty forecasted number needs to consider things like average oil price, the exchange rate, the average production rate. It also needs to include some other common sense analysis such as: What will the impact of a low oil dollar have on companies' capital plans? Will we see further decreases in production as companies take advantage of low oil dollars at a time when it makes sense from a business perspective for them to consider it?

It is up to government to encourage these producers to think about things in the long term and make sure that those shutdowns happen in the best interest of the business, and more importantly, the people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, to be clear, Nalcor will bring long-term revenue to the Province, the minister said. In 2015-2016, the government is going to put \$760 million into Nalcor. He went on to talk about the injection, saying that over the total investment period of ten years the provincial government will have invested \$3.1 billion into Nalcor.

So the financial statements for the Province have been blown up with debt to be invested in Nalcor at the same time that the Crown corporation has leveraged its balance sheet and driven the debt for that Crown corporation at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I would ask as this government pontificates about its ability to plan for things: Where exactly have they planned for the equity injection for Bay du Nord? I ask the Premier, now that you have mandated your minister to finalize a deal by the end of the year,

which is not the smartest negotiation strategy there is, by the way, I would ask: Where in the books – in government's books, in Nalcor's books – is the equity injection for this investment in Bay du Nord?

Mr. Speaker, this Province has been sold, over the last decade, a plan by this government called the Energy Plan. The Auditor General reviewed that plan which outlined 107 policy actions. During the Auditor General's review of the Energy Plan he noted, "Despite a commitment to do so, there has been no comprehensive progress report on the implementation of the Plan as a whole released to the public."

This was a plan that this government spent \$3.1 billion on to create and invest in a Crown corporation and all kinds of other things that they sold the people of the Province on about an energy warehouse. Well, Mr. Speaker, there needs to be an accountability to that plan and an accountability to the people of the Province on what this government has sold to them.

That brings me to the eighth of this government's long-term principles. That is, and I quote from his Budget Speech, "... we will establish a Generation Fund in which a percentage of the revenues we accrue from oil projects will be invested for" – and listen carefully – "future generations." For future generations.

He goes on to say, "Having invested our initial years' worth of oil revenues in debt reduction and infrastructure deficit reduction, we will begin investing in the Generations Fund as soon as we return to surplus." He goes on to say, "We are developing and will bring forward legislation to establish this" – and I quote – "trust fund and define the parameters according to which revenues will be invested and managed."

Mr. Speaker, a savings account is a great idea, and it was a great idea ten years ago. Had government put away even a little reserve of the funds they had at their disposal over the last ten years, it would be there for times of volatility like we are seeing today. Government cannot reconcile its deficit budgeting and plan to grow debt to \$14.85 billion with its plan to create a fund. How will you pay for it? By the time you

return to surplus, debt reduction will be undone; infrastructure will be pushed out. So if you believe the minister's spin, we will be back where they found themselves in 2003, but with the bulk of oil revenues behind us. The government has not provided any clarity on where the revenue will come to balance the Budget, pay down the debt, while growing this fund.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, this government sold the people of the Province that Muskrat was their legacy fund. Parents set up trust funds to keep their kids from spending their inheritance money. They do not set up the trust funds after the money has all been spent.

Now this government wants to talk about a generation fund. They say their legacy will be creating an energy warehouse. That will be their legacy. Well, Mr. Speaker, the water and oil were there long before this government tried to take claim. The reality is this government is turning their back on the population reality, and they have been for years – the inverted pyramid of our population, the demographic reality facing our Province, as the Minister of Health knows very clearly, the fastest aging population.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what does that mean? What does the fastest aging population mean? Well, here is a reality check. It also means, sadly, the fastest dying population.

Reaction to this Budget, to the Tory's mismanagement, to their continued mismatched priorities, is fear, people are frightened; but, even more importantly, they are angry. They have seen this government focus singularly with tunnel vision on individual sectors that were easy to work on. It was easy to grow the oil revenues as part of our GDP when it was pumping out of the ground. It was not easy to grow industries like agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, because that takes really hard work, and this government did not want to do that hard work, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last fall I had the pleasure, as I was asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition, to travel across the Province and have some conversations with people in communities about what they feel about the economic reality of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We looked at entire GDP breakdown of industry by sector. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the chart, you see oil here and every other industry here. This government failed to look at diversifying our economy, and that is what that chart shows. Let's go one step further. In order to grow an economy and in order to deal with the population issue that we are facing we have to find a reason; we have to give people a reason to stay here. Quite frankly, they are not going to stay here. They are not going to put down roots here if they cannot find jobs.

Employment by industry – top five employers in this Province currently, as of the end of 2013: number one employer, health care; number two employer, retail; number three employer, construction; number four employer, government; and number five employer, education.

So, let's take a look at what is contributing to the GDP. The number one contributor to GDP is oil extraction. That is not driving jobs. Finance, insurance, and real estate is the number two job creator in Newfoundland and Labrador; number three, construction; number four, mining; and number five, health care.

Mr. Speaker, the problem that this government had is they accepted the GDP increases but they did not understand that extra royalties did not create the breadth of jobs that we need in our Province to protect our population and to grow our population.

Mr. Speaker, how do we change this? What can we do? Quite frankly, there is a well-known quote by a renowned – or I should not say renowned, by an infamous politician that used a quote. I think his quote was, "It's the economy, stupid." I would argue that in Newfoundland and Labrador today we are at a time in our history when this quote is very apropos: It is about the jobs, stupid.

People will only be here, stay here, live here, choose here if the right job for their skills is here, if they can make a living for their family. We must increase the working population in our Province, period. Why? Because we have to switch that population pyramid over. We have to make sure that we protect generations to

come. To do that, we must have jobs and we must have people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, these two things are critically interwoven and they must be managed in synchronicity. They are connected. They are interlocked.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot missing from this Budget, particularly in the area of economic development. We on this side of the House know a thing or two about economic development. We have more managerial expertise and entrepreneurs. We understand the importance of growing the economy.

You may think that the only options are tax and spend, but on this side of the House we believe we can grow our economy, grow our workforce, and grow our population.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, the people on this side of the House, the Liberal Party, have not given up on the Province, and will not give up on the Province despite the fact that this government has.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: We can act and make decisions that improve the lives of the people of the Province. There are things we can do locally to improve conditions in the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I promised the people I met last fall that I would stand in this House and share their words. I will share what people of the Province said about economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador. In Carbonear they said: There should be mandatory resource development expectations. We need to stand up for ourselves. We need to put teeth in the benefits agreements that would ensure that the benefits are seen and felt in Newfoundland and Labrador, including rural Newfoundland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, they said there are barriers to economic development. They are

landlocked in their communities. There are mandatory development needs, but municipalities need the land for development. Crown land must be made easier to access. The speed of support from government agencies was an issue. They said that political interference in economic development was an issue for this government; politics before jobs.

Mr. Speaker, people in Carbonear went on to say: we need to grow our market domestically. Networking opportunities were limited for business operators in one part of the Province to network with other parts of the Province, and there needed to be these connections.

We talked about growing market share internationally. There was passionate, passionate discussion about the need to grow our fishery.

Mr. Speaker, I listened earlier as the Minister of Fisheries talked about this government's research. I would ask: Has that not been the responsibility of the federal government? Why have you not been able to get the federal government to do the job it is supposed to do for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: They said the forestry must be grown. Rural economic development is a must. Population has declined, which makes growing our workforce real tough.

In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, people there said Phase III of the highway needs to be done. It is impacting freight movements. Transportation infrastructure needs to improve.

In Goose Bay, they talked about the actual Goose Bay port and the opportunities for a regional port to access the North. The entrepreneurial risk appetite is less in our Province, they said, than when job future is uncertain. 5 Wing Goose Bay is a terrible waste of potential infrastructure. There is business, housing, health care, and long-term care opportunities with that asset.

Mr. Speaker, they went on to say: opportunity for a data warehouse and Labrador City as an employer is a way to diversify our economy. I

would ask this government: What have you done on that idea that is coming from the ground in Labrador?

People spoke to me about New Dawn, the agreement with our Aboriginal neighbours. It was supposed to provide opportunities but those opportunities, people said there, have not always been realized. Again, the topic of political interference and projects was brought up by the people I spoke to last fall.

We spoke about benefits agreements, manufacturing, and agriculture. We had conversations in Stephenville. We had conversations in Clarenville. People talked about government red tape, the education system not promoting business in an entrepreneurial lifestyle. They spoke about the opportunity to celebrate our people and culture and arts with the spirit of entrepreneurship that allowed jobs to be created and opportunities to be found here in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, we spoke about the fishing industry and that the Province needed to stop treating the fishing industry as an expense and treat it as a potential industry to grow in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, in Corner Brook we talked about exit strategies for succession planning and the need to support and training for entrepreneurs as they move into retirement and young entrepreneurs come in to take over those businesses. We talked about the cultural tourism sector and the need for true accurate data that small businesses need to make critical decisions.

We talked about the need to have one-stop shopping for information. We talked about the shortage of the right labour at the right time constraining business growth. We talked about workforce development and that people are losing faith in the Newfoundland economy because of our population issue. The data does not lie, but there is no secret as to why we are in this position we are in today.

We talked about technology and young generation training, coding and digital

distribution, fisheries. We talked about diversifying and actually leveraging the fisheries to be able to use it as part of growing our cultural industry and our tourism industry. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, based on what I heard, based on what people are telling me, our Province has succumbed to what Stanford University Professor, Terry Lynn Karl, calls the Paradox of Plenty. As an academic, the MHA for the District of St. George's – Stephenville East has actually written papers on the subject of how economies and governments are sometimes narrowed in their scope by non-renewable resource discoveries, like the oil boom here in our Province.

What will Liberals do differently? I will make it really, really simple so there is no confusion. We intend on building a smarter economy, Mr. Speaker, a smarter economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: A smarter economy that maximizes the potential of our natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable. We will recognize that we need to address how the low literacy levels in our Province have to grow so we can have a skilled workforce that sets us up for success.

We will look at creating pathways to success that will include pathways for our youth who all too often feel shut out. That is why our leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition has spoken regularly and frequently on the youth entrepreneur and retention program. We will introduce a strategy to engage our youth in entrepreneurship and help them create a smarter economy of tomorrow for all of our communities. In essence, identify what is possible and find the smartest way to do it.

When we consider that Atlantic Canadians are the most likely to start a new business, but sadly, the least likely to flourish, we need to reflect on creating the conditions for businesses to succeed, and providing the coaching and creating the mentorship opportunities for new start-ups to de-risk their business plan and increase their chances of success. Helping entrepreneurs learn how to raise private capital

for great ideas increases the access to growth capital to foster start-ups and expand existing businesses.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the Leader of the Official Opposition has also spoken about business investment tax credits to support the growth of new business throughout the Province. Why? Because we have to create new jobs. The only way we are going to improve and increase our population numbers is to create new jobs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Government's goal from economic development must be to create opportunities for people to work, live, and raise their families in our Province. We must have a conversation as a community about maximizing the potential of our natural resources. We acknowledge that some of them are non-renewable, absolutely. Benefits agreements that are broad and far reaching, and look for opportunities in both the start-up phase of the project, as well as the operational phase of the projects by further extending supply chains for our local businesses are opportunities to grow our local businesses with global markets. We must challenge ourselves on how we further leverage this economic engine I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mandatory resource development requirements; I challenge this government to ask how they have been accountable to the mandatory resource development requirements and the sustainability in benefits agreements. I do not think anybody in this House would now be surprised that less than 4 per cent of our employment comes from oil and gas, and less than 2 per cent comes from mining. We need to change that. In other areas we need to grow our renewable economic drivers.

Mr. Speaker, we need to grow domestic markets in our Province for locally produced goods and services – and yes, we can grow our oil extraction and supporting services sector, but so too can we grow others. We can do this by working in partnership with industry and setting targets to grow market share and work together to achieve those targets.

Mr. Speaker, the people on this side of the House, the Liberal Party, under the leadership of the Leader of the Official Opposition, we believe we can grow agriculture, forestry, fisheries, information technology, manufacturing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: – culture, the tourism sector, and we will grow our domestic markets so then we can leverage that growth –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I have obviously gotten the opposite side of the House very excited with these ideas.

Mr. Speaker, we can grow our domestic markets that can leverage the growth to grow our global market share. We need to sell locally so that we can sell globally with simple, practical things.

Here are a couple of quick ideas. Are small businesses thinking virtually? According to the BDC, only about 12 per cent of small businesses are selling things online, when the majority of Canadians use the internet to inform or facilitate consumption.

Exporting: Are businesses thinking globally about the things that they are selling domestically, and how can we facilitate the supports and mechanisms that they need to sell their products globally? The fact that 86 per cent of exporting companies – this is a stunning number: 86 per cent of exporting companies in Canada are small and medium enterprises, and realizing how accepted this method of market share growth actually is, is encouraging. That is why we need to look at leveraging our small and medium businesses, like the Leader of the Official Opposition has said. Because do you know what? Every small business that hires two people makes a big difference in the community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I stood in this House for almost two hours yesterday and I listened to the minister of Child, Youth and Family Services pontificate questions about who is the boss. Well, let me assure the minister, let

me make it very clear to him, because it is obvious that this government has forgotten exactly who the boss is. The boss in this House of Assembly, quite frankly, Minister, is the people of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: – and the sooner he remembers that, the sooner his government will start showing some leadership.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about thinking virtually and globally, in a way, we can apply these concepts –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about thinking virtually and globally, we can apply these concepts and thinking to rural economies and how to revitalize them. How do we utilize technology and overcome geographical challenges? How can we reinforce relationships to overcome technological challenges, such as a lack of broadband Internet in certain areas of the Province? We have to ask ourselves: Do the conditions for businesses to succeed differ in rural Newfoundland than they do in urban Newfoundland and Labrador.

Growing markets requires thinking outside of the box and we believe, our leader believes, that the spirit to try and the spirit to succeed lives strong in the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but it does not live strong in this government, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: There is a social economy and government is not doing everything it can to grow our economy.

Other provinces in Canada have strategies in place. We have seen in our Province successful social enterprises like the Shorefast Foundation, SABRI, and DieTrac. These social enterprises are examples of what is happening in rural communities where jobs become a priority and people get to work.

Mr. Speaker, we can look outside of our Province and see models that are working in growing economies, helping at-risk populations find meaningful employment as previously mentioned. We can look in our own Province at organizations like the Stella Burry Centre and what that organization and that social enterprise is able to do to provide employment opportunities for people who need those opportunities, and then also use those jobs as a way to train those individuals to have even much more amazing opportunities than they would had they not had that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, this Province developed an innovation strategy in March of 2006. I would ask: What are the metrics of success for the innovation strategy? Has there been an increase in filing of patents? Are we getting more in innovation and development tax credits? Are we developing new products and services? The answer is, Mr. Speaker, this Province does not know.

What we do know from the report of the Conference Board of Canada is that Newfoundland performs poorly on indicators of innovation including research, development, spending, and patent applications.

For Newfoundland and Labrador firms to be innovative, they need to see a policy and regulatory environment that is alert to the needs of the industry and agile in its response. In the Throne Speech, government has said it has been working on lean processes but has not even implemented themselves.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear stories about firms in our Province that cannot bid on provincial tenders. We need a policy and we need ideas that provide Newfoundland companies an opportunity to bid locally so that they can get that local market share so they can earn the reputation to sell their wares on a global stage. We have to use procurement to showcase

the innovative products and services that are abound in our Province. If government really cared about procurement's ability to support local business, this would have already happened.

Mr. Speaker, to manage economic benefits, we need an intellectual property policy that is conducive to industry engaging with MUN. Government needs to develop greater linkages between firms, MUN, key government agencies, and departments and regulators. Education must meet the standard in terms of relevance and quality. They are two different things: relevance and quality. This must be met so we can compete in a global economy.

Mr. Speaker, setting targets for growth across a broad range of economic drivers and not just two or three sectors is critical to the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is why we are in this situation today. There were no targets and no accountability within government. Tell us what sectors you had targets for and tell us what you actually achieved in all of those industries. The fishing industry has not changed as a contributor to GDP since this government took over. Mr. Speaker, these sectors drive the economic engine of our Province, or at least they can.

I would ask the government: Who did you consult in the community around the impact of HST?

Benefits agreements have the opportunity to create much more business integration and networking opportunities than simply, but importantly, building it and making the project construction work here. We have been content in our Province to lay pipe and build things. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is not enough. Benefits should be providing something beyond just the project.

Mr. Speaker, we have an Office of Public Engagement. I would ask, how is that office engaging with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who have ideas, who have a passion to grow our economy, to grow industries and sectors that this government has chosen to ignore because they were addicted to oil? The Office of Public Engagement has become known as the department that uses clickers. We intend

to utilize – and would utilize – public engagement in a real, meaningful way, public engagement that is about driving our economy.

Let's talk about something simple about red tape. Reducing risk for investors is important. The current environment ministerial changes and the number of ministerial changes have created policy and instability in that department. Environmental assessment timelines are like spinning the Regatta wheel, you never know when your number is going to come up. We have to ensure that the risk is reduced.

Mr. Speaker, what about the obvious pillar in this government's economic view and its view of what is going to be the legacy, Nalcor Energy. Could we not have figured out a way that Nalcor could use their major procurement decisions, and when they go to other countries to purchase things that cannot be purchased in Newfoundland and Labrador, that they might be able to connect back to a local provider for products and services? Tower steel when they went to Turkey; in Japan when they got turbines; in Italy when they went to get project management. Could they not have included our local business community to gain from those opportunities?

We would like to have bulk procurement done locally. If we have to go outside of the Province it is a good time to try and open up relationships with other locations to allow the opportunities for new markets and allow for reciprocal trade.

Mr. Speaker, there is net metering. Net metering was promised by this government in 2007, and now it is 2014. We have committed to smart metering. The reason we have, is that local businesses would have been developed. Manufactures and businesses that are trying to reduce their energy cost would have been given that opportunity to do it. Quite frankly, this government's policy on net metering has hampered innovation. Development of products that need to be developed, are not being developed. The minister keeps saying he is doing it, but still it is not done.

Mr. Speaker, our intention would be to work with winners. Help those winners, help those companies that have the potential to employ many more people, help them reduce the time to

market, develop markets more quickly. We understand not every company has global aspirations, but those that do, we need to pay special attention to those firms.

I ask this government: What has been your trade strategy? You have been in government for twelve years. Surely by now, after the Crown jewel, Nalcor Energy, was created, surely by now you have created a trade strategy. Mr. Speaker, these are all ideas, and the possibilities are enormous. We see these possibilities where this government fails to see them. We see them, and we see the urgency of acting.

Economic growth, growing jobs, growing our workforce are linked to the single, biggest act of mismanagement oversight this government has ever made. The failure to protect and ensure there are future generations, let alone a generations fund, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Let me be clear, it is our intention that our leader, who was elected by 12,000 people in the Province to lead our party – he believes in the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. He believes in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and with the innovative ideas that we will passionately work to execute, we will get results, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: It is our intention to bring electoral reform that not only addresses campaign finance rules, something they failed to do, but MHA pension reform, which they had a decade to do. Mr. Speaker, even more, further reform will address the fixed election date so floundering governments that lack a mandate from the people can never again put our political fortunes ahead of the interests of the people of this great Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my remarks – yesterday, I believe – I was doing some door to door in St. John's West this weekend, and a voter at the door summed up this Budget for me. She summed up this Budget for me when she said it

was time for an election. It is time for an election.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, her reason was simple. She had simply lost confidence, lost faith in this government to do what needs to be done for the people of the Province.

Therefore, I, as the Member for Virginia Waters, moved and seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, that all the words after “that” be struck out of the Budget motion and be replaced with the following: That this House condemns the government for its failure to present a fiscally responsible program which addresses the immediate economic problems of rural areas of our Province, as well as the serious social needs that exist in this Province, and its failure to create a climate of sustainable economic growth within the Province.

So moved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: This House now stands in recess to review the amendment.

This House is now in recess.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

After consideration, the amendment is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters, to continue debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, throughout my remarks yesterday and today, I have listed dozens and dozens of ideas on how to grow our economy and how to grow jobs for people of the Province. All those ideas come down to identifying, quite frankly, the right priorities, creating solid business cases, executing on plans, using accurate financial

facts, and holding ourselves accountable to delivering outcomes and getting results, and that takes me back to the Budget.

This document is a defining moment for our Province. This document is a report card on whether this government after a dozen years, whether the Progressive Conservatives have delivered results. This government's budgeting process is ineffectual, short-sighted, lacks accountability, and is driven by self-interest.

The consultation process they undertook was a PR exercise, particularly this year, as it occurred long after government's own internal process began. This is not the transparent process the Premier committed to as part of his leadership. Consultations need to happen in a meaningful and significant way. People have their ideas, people have their answers, people have their questions, and that is what you need to fully understand the implications of your idea or your opinion.

People in this Province are tired of being told what is right, what the real story is, and what they do not understand. Mr. Speaker, they are fed up with government's attitude towards Labrador, towards the Aboriginal community, towards the disabled, towards youth at risk, towards rural Newfoundland, towards our children's education, and most recently, this government's attitude about what is right or wrong for an elected member of this House to question.

Mr. Speaker, therein lies the problem. Therein lies the real issue of this government. They have lost their ability to question, to challenge, to query, and to demand. Their decisions are focused on their needs versus the needs of the Province. We only need to look at one of the most recent PMRs that was debated in this House of Assembly and that was the debate about parliamentary assistants.

When former Premier Dunderdale announced her first Cabinet in 2011, she got rid of two government departments and shrunk her Cabinet from nineteen to sixteen – nineteen ministers to sixteen. At the same time, she announced two parliamentary secretaries. Just a year later, when she must have thought that everyone had forgotten and she was trying to save money, she

actually announced a third parliamentary assistant, adding \$81,000 to the bottom line. At the time, this is when this government was doing belt tightening, and they went from two to five parliamentary assistants a year later.

As we debated in this House regularly, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only Atlantic Province with paid parliamentary secretaries. There are Cabinets that are larger and smaller than ours and they manage their affairs in other provinces without paying parliamentary secretaries. The Premier in other provinces takes on much larger portfolios than the current Premier in Newfoundland and Labrador. Maybe he could assume some more responsibility from his other ministers.

Mr. Speaker, I use this example very purposely. This government came into the House of Assembly and defeated a motion that the Official Opposition made, and you have to ask why. Why did they not agree? Well, it is simple, Mr. Speaker; this government has lost their focus on the people, on the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and instead are focused on themselves.

Mr. Speaker, there is a fundamental principle of good governance and that principle is that to govern well, you must be able to see reality. This government has become stale, blind, and ineffective, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are looking for an alternative, an alternative that will put trust and accountability back in the Province's finances.

I want to read from an independent commission on good governance and public services, six key areas where governance decisions are critical and demonstrate what governance looks like. Number one, "Good governance means focusing on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users." Mr. Speaker, this side of the House of Assembly has been talking repeatedly about the importance of outcomes, and that is why.

"Being clear about the organisation's purpose and its intended outcomes for citizens and service users" are important, the report goes on to say. "Making sure that users receive a high quality service." "Making sure that taxpayers receive value for money."

The number two criterion that describes good governance: “Good governance means performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles.” Mr. Speaker, as we have seen this government transition ministers in and out of departments – the Minister of Health has changed in this Province fourteen times in twelve years. Is there any wonder that there has been a lack of good governmental oversight in the Department of Health to ensure the supports and services that the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve are in place – fourteen ministers.

The third item they talk about in the report is, “Good governance means promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour.”

Mr. Speaker, this government purposely brought in legislation to try to keep information private. Why? What was the reason why? We are relieved and pleased that the government finally listened to the people of the Province, to the Official Opposition, to its critics, and brought in legislation that is reflective of the values of people of Newfoundland and Labrador and not reflective of the government of the day.

When you ask the question: Why? It begs the question: What do they have to hide? Why did they need to have this information kept quiet? That is not the value that people of the Province expect their government to reflect.

Number 4, “Good governance means taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk.” Yet, we listened today to the most recent example, questions about this government’s decision around long-term care. We asked the minister, we asked the Premier: What is the information that you have? Share it with the people of the Province. Share it with the people so they understand why you are making that decision.

“Good governance means developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective.” Well, Mr. Speaker, when divisions and departments do not have clear leadership, or leaders constantly change, or strategic plans are several years late, or we have strategies that are supposed to be put together so our public sector understand what the

government’s priorities are and those reports are not done and those plans are not made, that is not good governance.

This is the last one. “Good governance means engaging stakeholders and making accountability real.” Yet, the minister stood up last week and read out of his own Budget document about the incredible economic opportunities in the Province to come, but he failed to acknowledge the reality, which I have spent the last two days trying to articulate.

Mr. Speaker, people of the Province expect their government to act in the best interests of the people of the Province. This is a fundamental principle. As I said earlier, to govern well you have to see the reality. This government has become stale, blind, and ineffective. I think the people of the Province are tired of a government that has run out of ideas and run out of energy.

What would Liberals do differently, is the question. Well, I can tell you one thing we would do. We would have used a cautious method with budgeting for revenue that was out of our control. Oil royalties are out of the Province’s control. We would have had a small reserve fund set up to smooth out the times of volatility. What we will do is we will plan, based on financial facts that target outcomes. We will execute those plans and ensure we get the results.

Mr. Speaker, we would act more quickly on the 100 or more recommendations of the Auditor General to save taxpayers money. More importantly, we would have diversified the economy, focusing on small and medium businesses, creating opportunities for people to work and growing our population.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon I started to share some of the feedback people from the Province had given me when I had spoken to them about growing and diversifying our economy. I think it is important to continue to hear what those people said for a moment.

In Corner Brook last October we spoke about exit strategies, succession planning, and the need for support and training for entrepreneurs who are retiring so they can transition their business, transition that wealth, and transition those job-

creating entities to future generations. We have seen time and time again in our Province businesses close because the connections between the retiring business operator and the young person who wants to operate their own business has not been made.

Last year in Corner Brook we heard about the need for accurate data. When businesses are planning small and medium businesses, they need to know the accurate information. They do not need to know the government spin. They need to know the facts of their industry so they can make decisions about investments, decisions about future job growth, and decisions about the future growth of their company. They need to know government is there to provide one-stop shopping for information. That is what their words are, Mr. Speaker. That is what they are looking for.

Mr. Speaker, we spoke about the fishery and the need for species diversification and processing. We talked about the ability to leverage our fishing industry to further support cultural industries and the tourism industry – all ways to integrate sectors and grow them.

In Clarenville, we spoke about small businesses and the need to help our young people understand risk management, and to educate them and have them embrace risk, but managed risk. We talked about agricultural markets and how we need to open up the domestic market right here in Newfoundland and Labrador to our own farmers, and how we need to train farmers to be even more savvy entrepreneurs than they are today.

Mr. Speaker, we spoke about tourism, and tourism operators spoke about the concern they have about succession planning in the tourism industry. Business evaluations will not go up, and reinvestment will not happen unless succession planning is happening. That is a symptom of the issue I spoke about earlier, which is the population pyramid, and the fact that in our Province we have a population pyramid that is inverted.

We have more people at the age of retirement, more people at the age where they need long-term care, and more people at an age where they are moved out of the workforce. We do not

have opportunities – this government has not created opportunities for those young people that we need to keep and retain here.

We talked about the fact that this government has not looked at seniors in a way to encourage seniors to participate in our workforce, that they are a valuable labour component, and that many seniors would like to continue to work and like to continue to contribute to our economy, but it needs to be their choice.

In Grand Falls-Windsor we talked about the need to have an attraction plan so that people will come back. Because we are not going to get them back if there are no opportunities here and we do not communicate to those people who left our Province over the last decade.

We talked about the opportunity of making our economy leverage one of the biggest realities about our economy, which is health care; leverage that to grow businesses that support health care innovation in our Province so that we can create technology, create learning, and create systems and processes that allow us to sell that to other markets.

In St. John's we talked about the need to celebrate the importance of the private sector and government thinking that the business community is important and needs to be celebrated. They talked about investing in innovation, investing in technology, investing in employees, mentoring and encouraging entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship was the single most consistent theme that came out of all of the conversations.

These people spoke about government red tape and agriculture, and that in the agriculture industry sometimes it can take up to five years to be successful. The normal start-up time phase for business is three years, and how do we close that gap. We talked about child care and the affordability and the availability of child care.

Then they wanted to speak about benefits from the oil business and how those benefits agreements needed to include more consultation with stakeholders and, going forward, that there needs to be a better mix and balance when it comes to supporting the projects and ensuring that there are opportunities for Newfoundland

and Labrador companies to grow through servicing the oil industry here so they can be competitive on the global market, and focus on where our competitive advantage is they told me.

We talked about the mismatched workforce, something that this government has failed to address. As I spoke about yesterday, they still continue to not acknowledge the fact that we have a mismatched workforce in our Province. Even when they have their own examples of the mismatched workforce in not being able to open a long-term care facility because they cannot staff it, yet we have people unemployed in our Province that have not had the opportunity to be trained and job ready for those opportunities, Mr. Speaker. That is what a mismatched workforce is.

People talk to me about what they call the silver tsunami, succession planning and mentorship for wealth transfer. They talk to me about the need for innovation and better systems and processes inside their businesses, but more importantly inside government. One idea was how do we include business entrepreneurship in our schools, in our universities, in our private colleges, and in our college system, so that everybody who has a trade, everybody who has a skill can figure out how they themselves can grow that into a business opportunity and hopefully look to employ other people.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, what would the Liberals have done differently? I can tell you that we would have planned on financial facts and with targeted outcomes. We would have executed the plans and gotten results.

Plan after plan after plan after plan that this government has said they are going to execute, we still wait here. People of the Province wait here for the results of those plans, even their own, the biggest plan ever, the Energy Plan. People are still waiting to feel those results alive in the communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that Liberals would be open and transparent and honest with the public. Unlike this government, who have presented a Budget based on future wishes instead of the facts of today, Mr. Speaker, we

would look to do things like aligning the Budget and Estimates process and develop annual and public budget cycles while developing a culture of accountability.

Clearly, there is absence of leadership in departments, which is impacting not only their ability to manage the affairs of the Province, but, quite frankly, it is impacting the ability of our public service and the culture of our public service by driving down morale, by increasing stress, and lowering productivity. That is the absence of leadership, what this government has created in our public sector workers.

We will take every opportunity we can, every opportunity that we are afforded to in this House, to speak to this Budget because this is a turning point in our Province. It is really, really important that the people of the Province understand the extent of this financial mess, how the Tories mismanaged us into it and how the Liberals will get us out of it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: How the Liberals will get us out of it. The Liberal solution goes well beyond the scope of the Tory's tunnel vision. This government would let you believe there are only two options: tax or borrow.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals take a more strategic view because there is a need to reduce waste and get our Province's finances under control. We do not support an increase in the HST. This will only stunt our already weakening economy and make it more difficult to build a life here and leave the people of this Province paying for the Tory's mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals would better manage expenses and we will grow the economy. If necessary – I want to be crystal clear because the members on the opposite side of the House seem to consistently forget this. Liberals would better manage expenses, grow the economy and, if necessary, would borrow over increasing consumption taxes so we do not risk the revenue side of the ledger, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, if the minister understood that – if he does not understand that, maybe he does in fact need to brush up on his own math skills after all.

Today, our economy is struggling, with all indicators pointing in the wrong direction. This Province cannot risk another Tory misstep or do over. No more Tory missteps, no more Tory do overs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Economic analysts may have differing opinions on whether we are in a recession or not, but there is one thing that people on this side of the House in the Official Opposition understand and that is the people across the Province are feeling the effects of economic change and this government's inability to see it and inability to actually address it.

Led by the Leader of the Official Opposition, this team, a team of energetic and passionate leaders in our Province who are eager to get to work and put our business acumen to work to create opportunities for people across our Province in every single industry, not just oil, Mr. Speaker. We will do the work that this government has failed to do for the last decade.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear, I am very, very, very optimistic about the future of our Province. Not because of the Tory plans, not because of what they did but because of what people told me in the communities as I toured last fall about their ideas for growing our economy. One thing is clear; we need our economic policy better managed in this Province. We need better management in this Province.

Because Liberals are more experienced, we can get Newfoundland and Labrador out of this Tory mess. We are going to do that by executing on the plans, using actual accurate financial facts, holding ourselves accountable to delivering outcomes, and getting results. We cannot afford anymore to get it wrong. There are no more Tory do-overs anymore, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS C. BENNETT: It is time for better management in this Province so we address the challenges we are facing today and finally reach

our full potential. We cannot afford to get it wrong for ourselves or for our kids.

Liberals, under the leadership of the Leader of the Official Opposition, will build up a generation. It is time for strong management, long-term planning, and an open and caring government so we can create an economic change and finally reach our full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members of the House on both sides for their indulgence over the last number of days. I find it interesting that members on the opposite side of the House feel that discussing the future of our Province and the decisions we make in this House of Assembly, they continue to want to talk about it in jest.

Mr. Speaker, when I decided I was going to enter politics, I did it because I was tired of talking to this government with ideas and suggestions that were rebuffed and were refused. I was stunned to find out that there are hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people in this Province who feel the same way as I do. That we will not stand by any longer and watch this government continue to waste opportunities when we know there are solutions to the problems that our Province is facing today.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the conversations about this Budget will continue, will be targeted, will be specific, and will continue to challenge what this government says has been their success. The people of the Province do not believe this Budget is the right one for this Province. They clearly understand that the reason we are here today and we are faced with a plan to move the debt of our population to \$14.85 billion is this government's failure to plan, and they are not going to tolerate it. They are not going to tolerate, and nor should they, Mr. Speaker.

As the Budget debate progresses, I will look forward to continuing to add to the commentary in the debate here. I would ask those members on the opposite side of the House – I have to be really sincere, many, many people in this House, all of them, I think all of us have put our names on the ballot to come into this House to do the right thing and to make the decisions that are right in the best interest of the Province.

I would ask the members on the opposite side of the House, as they have listened to me debate for the last couple of days, think about when that vote comes to the floor, when we decide what is going to be the faith of this Budget, that every member dig deep into their conscience and think about their responsibility and their accountability to this Budget, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask every one of them to think about their boss and who the real boss is for each and every one of them as they sit in those seats over there. Their boss is the people who elected them, the people who gave them the privilege to sit in this House of Assembly, and I would ask them to think long and hard about whose interest they are going to put first: their own or the people of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to rise and speak to Budget 2015, Balancing Choices for a Promising Future. It certainly defines where we are going to go. It clearly outlines for the people of the Province over the next five years, not just this fiscal year, but it lays out a plan, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, what we are going to do and how we are going to lay it out.

Mr. Speaker, I was elected in 2007. I have certainly been involved in quite a number of budget discussions over those years. I always get up, and I always want to recognize the people of the Ferryland District who give me the honour of serving here in this Legislature as the Member for Ferryland. It is a privilege, for all members of the House wherever they serve and whomever they serve, it is certainly a privilege to be here and represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for a particular district in this House.

Mr. Speaker, this year, as was articulated by our Finance Minister last week, outlined a long-term plan for the people of this Province regarding where we are today in regard to our fiscal

situation; certainly able to do that and to outline that it is important to go back and reflect on where we have come and how we have moved as a Province over the past ten years since the Progressive Conservatives came to power in 2003.

What we have seen in this Province has been a transformation in terms of us as a people and our Province. All aspects of our society in Newfoundland and Labrador have changed over the past ten years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, to do that has required vision, it has required innovation, it has required the ability to think outside the box, and to drive different avenues of who we are as a people, reflecting on our past, reflecting on our history, reflecting on our traditional industries, but also looking to the future, looking to how we expand, how we take advantage of those opportunities we have.

Mr. Speaker, as everybody knows, from a natural resource point of view, we are very much commodity driven. We have our fishery which settled our harbours and coves some 400 years ago, certainly our forestry industry and those industries that brought us here and brought people – immigrated from all over the world to come here to build our communities, to build our regions, and to build who we are today and give us that strong culture.

I know coming from the Southern Shore, from a strong Irish background on the Southern Shore, like many parts in the Island, French and other parts of the Island, and all over the world that came to settle our community. That certainly makes us who we are today as we look forward and to build on our communities and our economy, socially as well, and we drive what we do.

So as a party, as a government since 2003, recognizing our past and how this Province has evolved, we have continued to grow the Province over the past ten years; and again, with what we have laid out in this year's Budget 2015, taking stock of where we are, the progress we have made over the past ten years, and laying out probably unprecedented for the Province a

five-year plan in terms of our financial situation for this financial year, but for the next five. Certainly recognizing there will be milestones, there will be checks and balances as we go forward in terms of hitting markers, financially, on where we are going to be each year for the next five years at Budget time, and we will be able to reflect on that each year as we go through.

Now, when we talk about leadership and vision and what we need in terms of a government and our Premier, and the vision and direction he established on where he wants to take this Province, it is very clear from his leadership and on now as Premier and the team that is assembled around him – the Finance Minister articulated very well the direction that we will take. It will be about leadership, it will be about measure choices, it will be about balance, and it will be about a plan. That is the approach we have taken. There are many approaches that could be taken here, but we have taken the approach that we will go with a balanced approach.

We need to raise some revenues, based on our financial situation, but we also need to generate extra activity in our economy. We have done that, we will continue to do it, but we have gone through an attrition program to look at our public service. Look at it over the next number of years as people – we know statistically about what we have learned: so many people come out of the public service each year. As they move over the next five years through an attrition process, as every ten comes out, there will be eight opportunities for people going back into the public service to be hired into the public service, to do the work that is so important for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Every eight that goes in, two will not, and through attrition we will reduce our public service, reduce the cost of the public service.

Again, we will be innovative in terms of looking at how we deliver services and doing it more effectively and certainly doing it more efficiently. That will allow us to continue to grow and to continue to need to do the things that we have identified that we need to do over the next five years of the fiscal plan that we have definitely laid out.

Mr. Speaker, we will take this approach to fiscal management because it is required. We have taken that leadership to do it, and we have laid it out for people to see. As we move forward over the next number of weeks here in this House, we will have debate back and forth on the choices we made and the plan we have outlined for the people of the Province to see.

When we do that, and over the summer as we move into the fall and go to a general election, we will be quite clear to the people of the Province. This is our vision. This is our leader. This is our plan. You have to choose. We will leave it to the people of the Province in terms of determining who it is they want to lead the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, based on the success we have had over the past ten years, based on the five-year plan we have laid out. They will decide in the fall who will lead this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, we heard reference from the Finance critic, in her speech, she talked about the fact that they would lead and her leader would be the Premier. Well, we will leave that to the People of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, in the fall. We will go to the people. We will lay it out. The people should always decide. They will decide in the fall who will serve them from the next four years as the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, we know now there are fiscal challenges and we have defined a clear path as to how we would deal with those challenges at this point in time. Obviously, the geopolitical events in terms of oil, oil availability, pricing in the world, has certainly affected us. At times, over 40 per cent of our revenues come from the oil sector.

It has dramatically reduced over the past year and it has put us in a situation where we have to reflect, certainly, on where we are, lay out a plan, and how we would come back to surplus. Continuing to do the things we need to do, providing services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but, as well, continue to grow our economy and do the things that are important to allow all of our people the secure well-being here in the Province. That

means securing a well-being in the fact that they have the services they need to live in any area of the Province, but they also have opportunities.

Opportunities, when we speak about our youth, we have done tremendous work over the past number of years to make opportunities available for our youth, everything from post-secondary education to driving new technology and innovation. Things like our engineering school. We have continued to promote the engineering facility in terms of increasing the number of seats that are in our engineering school. We look at our pharmacy school. We have continued to expand on. Our medical school we have invested in. We just recently opened a new genetics centre that builds on that research capacity in the Province, which is about sustainability, but also about being innovative and, certainly, branching out in our economy in different area and what we can do.

So it is all very important. That is all significant investment that we have taken and invested in various areas of our economy. From non-renewable resource royalties – we hear the comment: Where did it go? Well, there are some areas where it went in investment in institutions to drive opportunities for our youth and drive other opportunities to attract other industry, build capacity in areas, such like research, which is so important to long-term stability in terms of continuing to grow our Province.

As I said, 2015 – this Budget is about choices. As I said, it is a balanced approach. We certainly look at putting people first. We could have gone in and slashed and cut – it was often being suggested on the other side of the floor, but we decided not to do that. We decided to take the balanced approach. That is what was reflected in the Minister of Finance when he delivered his Budget.

These choices we are making – as I said, our detailed plan, a clear focus on management over an extended period of time with our finances. We are able to do this, Mr. Speaker, because of the fact we have made strategic investments over the past number of years.

We have invested in hydroelectric development like the Muskrat Falls Project. So we know that

we will have clean energy, almost 100 per cent. That will be a revenue generator. That is an enormous investment. We will invest almost \$3 billion over ten years. By 2025 that will return to us. After that, it is a revenue stream for us, for our Province, and for next generations.

Very simply put, my district in Petty Harbour has one of the first hydro plants, or I think the first hydro plant ever developed in the Province. We do not hear much about it, but the water keeps running. It keeps generating electricity, just like Muskrat Falls is going to do and keep generating wealth and revenues for generations to come in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a sound investment for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker, I would say.

As we move forward, as I said, we have laid out a clear plan over that five years in terms of how we can do it. Over those five years we have not stopped investing. We have not stopped investing in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and what is needed to continue to make strategic investments in all areas of our Province, even look at infrastructure. We will continue to invest in health, education, and significant areas where we have made significant investments certainly in things like poverty reduction, and on the social side of things to make sure that those who are vulnerable in our society are taken care of and we have the supports and programs to do that.

As I said, we have invested heavily in infrastructure over the past number of years. As part of the Budget documents that were released – solid investments in provincial infrastructure from 2004 to 2015. A great document that outlines – for those critics who say you squandered our oil revenues; you did not invest. Well, this reflects on where it is invested. It is invested all over the Province. Without sound infrastructure and what we found when we came to power and out dealing with that, we cannot continue to grow our communities. Without the infrastructure you cannot grow your communities, quite simple. You have to have the infrastructure.

When we came we had such a huge deficit in infrastructure. We invested. We make no apologies for investing in the communities,

towns and cities of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. It needed to be done and we did it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Again, Mr. Speaker, look at what that was in. You look at fees and textbooks in schools for our children, building infrastructure, building communities, building health care facilities, building all of that, programs for our seniors, the drug program we have, home care. The list goes on and on in how we invested, and infrastructure and service and programs for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We continue to recognize the public service and the investment we made in their salaries. I think somewhere in the range of 33 per cent or 34 per cent over our time, the average wages have increased. That was our commitment to the public service in recognizing that when we had wealth we would invest it and make sure they were recognized, and to be competitive. Because to grow our Province we need a competitive public service, and that is what we did. We reached in and made sure they were taken care of and that is the respect we showed to the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier about Muskrat Falls and the investments and long-term returns. Nalcor, as we know, is a company that was created, brought together – all would say natural resource development brought in under Nalcor. In 2007, we announced our Energy Plan. Look at the maximum development of our natural resources for the benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Muskrat investments; Nalcor will be self-sufficient by 2017. Every penny we have invested in Nalcor will come back to us in returns. That is a long-term investment, visionary, and returned to us by 2025. That means long term. We could get it, invest, and get it back to the Province. Again, as that water runs, we continue to get that revenue that is generated for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians which is so important.

A broad spectrum of investments to think about as our way forward now. When we talk about managing through this difficult financial time or fiscally this year, we reduced our deficit over the past number of years, paid down debt. So the position we are in now, and based on the investments we have made and returns we would get from our equity share in oil fields, as I said, hydro development. That was an investment that reduced our debt but also made strategic investments so in future years we will have our returns, have those returns. With the five-year plan we are laying out now that will bridge us to that and get us through these couple of tough years we see in terms of the fiscal situation and some of the effect that oil has had on what we have done.

That is strategic, that is thinking long term. I think one of the greatest initiatives of this government and what we have accomplished is since we have been in power is thinking long term, not one or two years, but long term in investments and making sure it is generational and it is coming back in the future for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is extremely important.

Mr. Speaker, last week one of the initiatives we announced in the Budget, certainly as Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, I am very pleased to be able to work on that with our communities, towns and cities across Newfoundland and Labrador, is the new fiscal framework. It is Community Sustainability Partnership worked on in terms of all of those.

The past two years, in 2013 we announced in the budget that we would work in partnership and collectively with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, all of those municipal leaders and communities and everybody who wanted to be part of that to discuss how we would move forward. Part of it was about our revenue stream but other issues were issues that are faced by municipalities, and how collectively to work together to deal with some of those. I am very pleased to have worked on that since last October as Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

I want to recognize all of those over the past couple of years who worked so diligently and put so much investment into it. Certainly

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, who are quite pleased and indicated with this new unprecedented partnership on access to new revenues for our municipalities, the work they had done. Their folks there with their municipalities, the staff of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs and the work they did in bringing this all together and to fruition to the point last week, as I said, we talked about that and announced for our municipalities.

The feedback is certainly strong in terms of what we announced. It was all about a partnership, working and listening together, working through a range of items that allow us to move forward on that plan.

I have spoken to some folks. I had the opportunity to attend the symposium for Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador on Friday and Saturday. I had great discussions with municipal leaders and municipal councillors. One comment was from the Burin Peninsula, when a municipal leader said this is something that has been talked about for twenty years. Twenty years ago no one ever thought we would be looking at something like the HST rebate or something like gas tax and access to those kinds of funds as new revenue generators, and that is what it is.

Churence Rogers, the head of MNL, talked about the fact that revenue is good, but it is also about the other initiatives and that partnership. Now you have a framework to build on. That framework was a long time coming, but it was this Premier and this government that established that we are going to do it. We took the leadership, we did it, and we concluded it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention my colleague, the Member for Gander who originally, in 2013, initiated this program, or initiative in 2013.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: He played a critical role in seeing this through. Other ministers too have worked on it, but I guess he was the catalyst to start it and move it forward. So I congratulate him on that.

I just want to talk about that because it is so important. We talk about sustainability of our region and predictability. It is so important that our communities have strong revenue sources, but also have a good partnership with the provincial government. I want to talk about some of the parts in regard to that.

I mentioned the revenue streams in regard to the HST rebate, as well as the gas tax. That is an investment of about \$46 million over the next three years in terms of new dollars. Mr. Speaker, that is \$46 million over and above the changes we made to the Municipal Operating Grants in 2014.

In 2014, we changed our Municipal Operating Grants formula. With that change, 80 per cent of the municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador got an increase. That is an increase for 80 per cent of our municipalities. None got a decrease. What we are seeing with this new announcement that we made, the Community Sustainability Partnership, there is an extra \$46 million revenue stream that will now go to those same municipalities to help them in terms of their community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: That could be municipal infrastructure, helping with administration, and staff. There is another component here I will talk about in regard to a water and wastewater initiative, in terms of supporting those types of things and training, which is all very important.

As well, one of the big things we heard in the consultations with MNL – and certainly we listened – was predictability in terms of funding. As the Province budgets each year, they try and project what they can allocate in our Budget. Government allocates each year and then municipalities become aware of that.

What we have heard is we need long term – they requested. We need predictability in terms of what funds we are getting, how many years we are getting, and those types of things. We listened to that.

As I said, in 2014 we brought in a new MOG formula. That was \$22 million and we have adopted it since. What we committed to this

year was that for the next three years, we will provide predictability that they have asked for. We will secure that \$22 million each year for the next three years for a commitment of \$66 million, Mr. Speaker. So that is significant again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: That is significant again in terms of identifying those funds that are required for towns and municipalities.

The other issue that came up in the discussions over time was access to Crown lands. As many know here, it could be for social or economic development in our municipalities. Oftentimes, there is a requirement for access to land. Right now if a town came forward and said they needed access for a municipal building, to build a fire hall, to build a municipal building, that would be transferred over.

What we are looking at in these cases would be issues for economic development where a town, a municipality, may have some business interests that want to come in, but they are not sure; it could be over a period of time. The way it is now for market value they would have to purchase all of that upfront. What we have proposed and agreed to is that we would identify an area maybe of land and we would freeze that land, if you will, and as the town developed and wanted to develop that land for economic development, they would pay at fair market value as they move forward. It would not be all upfront. So as they generated revenue from some of that property, then they could purchase this as they go forward. That would be over a five-year period.

That would allow them to do that. Again, it would be predictable for them and certainly I think would go to the sustainability of not having to pay all that upfront. That is something that MNL, Municipality Newfoundland and Labrador, we talked about. They were pretty excited about that component of it as well with their members again.

I talked about some of the revenue generators and the opportunity that poses for municipalities with the new revenue streams and what they add up to in regard to \$46 million, and as well the

\$22 million that we have committed with each year for the next three years. That is significant in terms of their ability to run their towns and to generate economic activity.

I said that was revenue stream but there are other aspects too that are important and goes to capacity building. Over the next year we will look at a pilot project in regard to regional water and waste water operations. That is significant. When you go back and look over the past number of years and our infrastructure that we have built, we have put a tremendous amount of money into especially water infrastructure, a variety of communities, larger cities, towns, and even small communities in terms of putting in various water facilities, and worked very hard at that.

We have identified through our consultations, through working with Environment and Conservation, Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Health there is often a capacity issue in our smaller communities in regard to being able to operate and have the expertise that is required. Even through the Department of Municipal Affairs, we do provide and help organizations to provide training, but oftentimes there is a shortfall.

So what we saw, collectively, as a partnership we needed to do, we need to continue to develop that and work on the ground with municipalities in regard to water and safe water. This project will look at that specifically. We will have three operators who will work with the three regional service boards: Eastern, Central, and Western, and identify communities that do have challenges in regard to safe drinking water. They could have boil water advisories. Advisories could happen where there is runoff and you have an advisory but you could come off that shortly thereafter. What we have found is that oftentimes the expertise to be able to do that may not be available. This process will allow that to be developed. It could be standard operating procedures that could be needed.

While through Service Newfoundland and Labrador, we do a great job in terms of testing and identifying. We have to, on the other hand, assist in terms of coming off those boil water advisories. We will provide service and help there to do that. Like I said something like

operating procedures, those types of things, and working with them and building that capacity on the ground, which is so important.

Oftentimes it could be the water infrastructure is there. It may not be operating properly. Maybe the procedure is not there to operate it. It could be a chlorination issue, but all of that needs to be looked at. That is what we are committing to, to work with our municipalities to do. It is greatly supported by Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. That is all about bringing together that whole water piece we talked about.

The other side of that are the waste water regulations, to look at those that the federal government has introduced. There are requirements to meet those with waste water and what municipalities have to do, and will have to do over the next number of years, based on their outflow, they may have to make adjustments or changes by 2020, by 2030 or 2040.

As we look at that and move down the road, there is tremendous infrastructure required for that. We have certainly, and I as minister, have called on the federal government to step up in that area and provide additional funding to that because based on what the requirements are and what we will need to do, that will be enormous in terms of the amount of dollars that will need to be invested in that. We certainly expect the federal government to step up.

What this will allow us to do is an analysis of what is required and give some indication of the amount of infrastructure that would be required and the preparatory work that is required as we move towards the first phase of that, which in 2020.

We will look at some issues again in terms of metering. Metering that outflow, we have started work with some municipalities to do that and we will continue to do that, but this Budget 2015 certainly commits to that and works in partnership with our municipalities to do it again.

Any time you give out new revenue streams to municipalities, it is always important to have accountability measures. With this new announcement, we have introduced these to the process in terms of operating grants and access

to gas tax revenues. We will require municipalities to do a summary of any taxes that are receivable or balances to the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, and we will have to make sure that taxes are collected where they can be; there is certainly an effort made to do that.

As well, from the new revenue stream, a town will not be able to reduce its revenue level on a per capita basis. We do not want this funding replacing funding that is already in place, or revenues that are generated. We want to build on what they have in their communities and regions, and continue to build the infrastructure and provide the services and capacity that are required for the residents in their area.

Also what is important as we look at the infrastructure that we have developed and worked with towns, we certainly start to look at – we have done some – municipal asset management framework where we know exactly what exists in terms of municipal infrastructure, what the shape of that municipal infrastructure is in, and how then we use that to plan forward in terms of replacing and building new infrastructure and that gives us a clear understanding then of what the requirements are.

Then we look at investments from the provincial government that we do now in terms of our budgeting, municipal capital works, as well, areas that we can access additional funds, areas like the Building Canada Fund, which was just renewed recently for another ten years. So, collectively through that we will identify asset management, infrastructure requirements, and then we can meet those needs as we move forward, which is important.

Those are some of the highlights of our Community Sustainability Partnership that we announced in Budget 2015. As I said, it was a collection of a lot of work for a lot of people. Just out at the symposium last Friday, I certainly spoke to a number of municipal leaders, Board of Directors of MNL, and it is very positive in terms of the new revenue streams and the ability for capacity building in the communities and regions this would allow.

We are certainly very delighted to support it. It shows our commitment to the process of

engagement, the process of partnership, working together. Five of the priorities, I think, Mr. Rogers indicated in the press conference we had – out of the five priorities, four were met. I am quite pleased with that and it certainly showed a commitment to us and through municipalities.

When we look back over the past number of years in dealing with municipalities, there has almost been over \$800 million in various projects, which is the total in infrastructure that has been spent over that period of time. The last three years another initiative of this government was to commit to a long-term funding stream of \$200 million because it was about predictability and sustainability for municipalities in terms of what monies they had from Municipal Capital Works.

That \$200 million went from 2014-2015 to 2016-2017. That would include the cities and towns that have multi-year funding. They would get that for three years. Then the other smaller communities would receive MCW on an annual basis if they were to apply for it. It is very important in terms of our communities and making that available.

We also announced as well, recognizing the commitment, we would commit to a second three-year period after 2016-2017 of \$175 million looking out beyond the next couple of years. Recognizing the importance of municipalities having access to municipal infrastructure and dollars and those types of things, we made again a long-term commitment to renew a new three-year period of \$175 million which is extremely important for our municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I reference a document we have here: *Solid Investments in Provincial Infrastructure*. If you go through this you can see never-ending indications of municipal infrastructure that was built. It was built out of those revenues that were generated here in our Province. Outside of that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, \$6 billion in total right through. It is not only municipal infrastructure in those communities and towns, we have built new health care facilities, we have

built new schools, we have built new recreation, and we invested in economic development. If you look at my colleague from the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, you look at areas of wharf infrastructure and what we have done in areas of the South Coast in terms of talking about diversifying our economy, sustainability.

I mean what has happened on the South Coast – and I certainly encourage anybody who has not visited to certainly visit. I had the pleasure when I was Minister of Fisheries to do it a couple of times and speak to the entrepreneurs down there, the business leaders, the community leaders, municipal leaders, and just residents there who have seen an amazing turnaround in terms of where it was ten years ago and where it is today.

We have been there and we have invested. I think we have invested wisely based in that industry and attracted a number of players to the industry. My understanding is there is still interest for other players to come. They are very excited about coming to that area, based on our pristine waters and the production that has happened down there recently in the past number of years.

Now, there have been some challenges. Like any industry, there are challenges, and we have certainly invested as well. We look at the state-of-the-art research science facility we have in St. Alban's, which is second to none, and provides that scientific approach that is so important for that industry. When investors are coming and they see that you have invested there and you have the expertise there on the ground that makes it very inviting to come. As well, that is very strong investment in the industry to allow it to grow.

Again, as I said, you go down and you can see small businesses have been started. There have been spinoffs for many areas in regard to that, and not just down on the South Coast. I know I was with my colleague in Bishop Falls and – what was the name of the company?

AN HON. MEMBER: Newfoundland Styro.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Newfoundland Styro and it provides many of the packages and everything that is required. It is just an example of how we

diversify the economy and have spinoffs from investments and it is a great example of that. There are others as well in the area, companies that have grown because of the aquaculture industry. That is how you diversify. That is wise investment. I think, to date, we have invested somewhere around \$30 million, a little over \$30 million. It is probably well over \$150 million that is invested in the private sector.

We provide the seed money, private sector comes in, we have the environment, we have an opportunity there for economic development and we seize that, and we certainly do it and continue to do it.

Mr. Speaker, as well, we talk about the fishery and somebody talked the farmed industry; we are looking now at the wild fishery in terms of what that is and how important it is to our Province. Overall it is well over a billion dollars in the last couple years. It continues to be extremely important, but we have invested heavily too in regard to the science portion of that. We have known over the past ten years the federal government has unfortunately gotten out of the science and research part of our industry here, especially in the ground fishery, and we have stepped in. We have certainly stepped in with big dollars, millions of dollars, and that is again where we have taken that money from our royalties and returned and we have invested it in very strategic places to grow our industry.

The minister mentioned today about the *Celtic Explorer* that is in port again. I think it is the fifth or sixth year in terms of the research that has been done – the fifth one, but we saw a void there or a gap that needed to be dealt with and we did it. We stepped in and we thought it was needed to be done. Really, in all of Canada, we probably have the best cod science and research ongoing anywhere in the country right now. It is supported by the Marine Institute. The work they are doing up there, the masters and Ph.D. students, who are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, a great number – maybe about fifteen now if I remember correctly. That is all part of the strategic investment of taking those dollars and investing in today but certainly seeing a great return in future years as well because we build that capacity.

Through that and through that information, we use that as we work with the federal government and DFO in regard to developing good policy in terms of developing the resurgence of our cod industry. It is a different industry than it was thirty or forty years ago when it comes back, but all indications are it is doing quite well. It continues to grow. With our other species, we compete nationally and internationally now all over the world in terms of our shrimp, crab, and other species we produce here. We can compete anywhere in the world and as the ground fishery comes back and cod comes back and we have the resources here and the knowledge and expertise to develop that, we will do that and we will compete in the international market again. That part of our industry will certainly revitalize and grow.

As a shellfish industry – crab industry again this year is good. We have some challenges with the shrimp in regard to the resource, but again this year I do not think it was what we expected. In both, the price this year has been very good in crab and shrimp. It is good for harvesters, good for processors, good for people who work in the facilities, so that is something our investment again continues to grow and it is important to us. We need to continue to do that.

As I said, much like laying out the five-year plan that the Minister of Finance and the Premier have overseen to lay out, we have strategically invested in infrastructure and spent that money and revenues that we generated, not for the immediate future but for long term to grow our communities and do what needs to be done, as I said, for the sustainability for our communities.

The other thing, initiatives we have taken over the past number of years – and I mentioned a little bit about research and development. I mentioned the genetics centre that was recently opened but also our Research & Development Corporation which we developed over the past number of years and, again, took revenues, some from obviously our non-renewable resources and invested in research and development here in the Province.

That again modeled much like Norway did when they started their oil and gas sector some years ago. That drives the partnership between science, research, and the private sector. The

corporation has made tremendous success in terms of meeting that challenge, building that partnership, and certainly leveraging dollars from that industry to allow greater research to be done. That becomes applied research so if there is an issue – I remember when I was Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development, responsible for RDC, there was an actual reservoir drilling requirement. There was lateral drilling that needed to be done.

There was a research chair set up between one of the oil companies and Memorial University to look specifically at that. It had to do with how you extracted more oil from the reserve. Obviously, if you can increase that technology and that expertise, the company gets a greater return and the Province gets a return through royalty. Those are well spent dollars on R&D and a partnership with the private sector that gives greater returns to all concerned. That is very important.

When you look at the investments we have made in the oil and gas sector in terms of equity, in terms of return on that equity, and the operating wells we have out there now, we look to Hebron and that coming on stream in 2017, again helping us through that. That will bring us greater production in terms of oil and increase our revenue. In late-2017 is the first start of Muskrat Falls. In regard to return on that investment, we will see a revenue stream from that again. Just looking at being strategic in terms of where we are investing and how we are investing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador's money.

Through all of this, I have talked about oil and gas and talked about the fishery. One that we hear across the floor oftentimes is innovation. I have mentioned the Research & Development Corporation but others too, our post-secondary institutions. I reflect on the Genesis Centre and the new developments, the new companies that are flowing out of our engineering, and the Marine Institute as well. Technology and science is about making available to our youth and having them exposed to it.

When you look at the past number of years in terms of our tuition fees and how we have transferred from loans to grants, that side of things. I mean all of that, our investments in

residences in the campus here in St. John's and our investments on the West Coast in Grenfell. You look at the Marine Institute and what we have done there, and the College of the North Atlantic in terms of developing infrastructure and making it top notch.

All of that allows our youth to access these resources to make sure they are well equipped, have opportunities to meet the needs of the labour force here in the Province, and elsewhere as well. Whether that is in any new industry or we say the more traditional industries, they can certainly meet the needs in that. It is very important that we do that. That has allowed us to do it.

I will get back and keep coming back to the same point. People say where did the money go? How did you invest it? We invested in infrastructure, invested in our people and services, but invested, too, a large part in infrastructure and education for our youth, that they have those opportunities and they can maximize those opportunities, which is really so important. That is long term again. I started off by talking about long-term investments. You are looking at today and next year, but you are looking at years to come and how we can maximize the opportunity for all concerned.

We look at capital investment and what is going to happen over the next number of years. There will be somewhat of a downturn, but as the Premier said, we will be just fine. We have laid out a strong plan in terms of the next five years fiscally. Where we were, where we are today, and where we are going to take us over the next five years to get us to surplus again. Through all of that, though, we will still be investing.

Capital investment; we will still be investing in services, still have a pretty good economy in terms of how the economy is doing. All of that, collectively, will put us in good stead as we move forward. As the Premier said, and under his leadership, we will do just okay. As the Minister of Finance has laid out, it is a plan. It is laid out, people will know what it is. That will let the people of the Province know where we are with it. We will have a debate on it here in the House over the next number of weeks, no problem. We will go back and forth on different visions, different views, and different choices.

No one will have to wonder where the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador and this government stands on what our plan is that we have made. We will lay it out. We will certainly encourage others to do it as well, Mr. Speaker. So we can look at who they are, we can debate them, look at who they are and see where it goes – and that is good, because that is good public debate. That is what you want. You want people to lay out what their vision is, what they believe in, what their policies are. We can talk about those. We can compare them and have all kinds of discussion on them.

Ultimately, at the end of the day you have to lay them out. You have to lay out what your plan is, and then we can talk about it and go through. That is important. We have to do that, Mr. Speaker, as well.

I want to just touch on in our Budget, Budget 2015, a number of areas we have recommitted and committed in other areas that we think are important as we move forward over the next number of years. Obviously, I spoke a little bit about Advanced Education and Skills and post-secondary. The investments we have made and made over the past number of years, and certainly continue to make now as we move forward to pursue post-secondary education, and encourage people to engage in and have access to post-secondary.

We want high-skilled graduates. We have that in the Province. We continue to produce very highly-skilled graduates to drive the Newfoundland economy. We also have very competitive rates in terms of tuition from outside the Province and internationally. We continue to do that. With any increase, we will still be more competitive nationally. Undergraduates will not change. We are still the most competitive in the country in regard to that. That is a commitment by our government. We will continue that commitment this year in Budget 2015.

I had an opportunity to be in the former Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development, and in that I saw first-hand the amount of inward investment, nationally and internationally, and also locally. The entrepreneurs we have here, the innovation we

see and being adaptive. Being able to grow maybe in their current area, but certainly grow in areas they did not before. Particularly in areas where we see major projects, whether it is Vale or some of the other mining projects, or some of the oil and gas development that is going on.

In innovation, I know ocean technology is a fascinating area from what we have seen from young entrepreneurs and researchers and developers here in the Province. We have developed a huge niche in terms of ocean technology. It is second to none.

ROVs, underwater digital imagery – there is a company in Clarenville. I met with them, a couple of young gentlemen. It is unbelievable what they have designed, built and, basically, commercialized right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They did it here.

So innovation is alive and well, and supports through Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development continues. We continue that commitment in Budget 2015. Over \$200 million in terms of nurturing that and being competitive in terms of the business community and business environment. That is extremely important.

We have done well over the past number of years but we continue to need to be competitive, and oftentimes provide those supports. Sometimes business does not need it. Sometimes government just needs to get out of the way. We do that as well, but where they need supports or we need to have seed capital – recently what was announced in terms of a venture capital fund for the knowledge-based industries, we have seen, as well, significant growth.

The venture capital fund that was set up through Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development allows capital equity for those knowledge-based companies to grow and prosper right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have had some to date that has done tremendously well, grown right here in the Province.

We continue to support it through the Atlantic ventures capital fund and, as well, our own local fund here for those entrepreneurs, as I said, usually in a knowledge-based industry. Based

on the type of industry it is, there is not a lot of capital involved but this venture capital and access to it allows them to grow those companies right here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, we are developing a cluster of those companies and that is another part of diversifying and using those funds that we get from royalties or from our non-renewable resources that we reinvest for diversity to help us continue to grow our economy and make greater opportunities.

Child, Youth and Family Services in Budget 2015 – we have continued to revitalize the child protection system in the Province, supporting out-of-home care options for children and youth. Many have seen the Foster a Future campaign, which has been extremely successful since that started. Again in 2015, we reinvest in that campaign which is so important.

There has been a lot of work done in that department with regard to dealing with children who need care. I congratulate those in the public service for the work they do in regard to this. This program has been extremely successful and we continue to support it again this year. Again, it is an area where we invest those dollars to make sure that the services are available for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Health and Community Services: Obviously, as people know, it is the biggest department in government, with significant budget. When you think about health care, all of us are touched by health care either in terms of illness or sickness from any point in our life, either individually or people we know who are a part of us, so health care is something that touches everybody and everybody is certainly familiar with it and the importance that it is. We have done that over the past number of years since being in power in terms of our commitments to health care and what we have done.

It has been a focus for us, better health outcomes, and provide better care and produce best value for our money, which is so important. We know we have the highest per capita cost in Canada for the delivery of health care. The Premier talked about when he was running for leadership and in creating the new department of wellness, to talk about a greater responsibility

for everybody in terms of our health care and working and being innovative in terms of some of the indicators we have in our Province in terms of health standards. They are not where they need to be, but we continue to work, we continue to invest; and certainly make sure that we have the infrastructure, we have the programs, we collaborate and we work with all health care providers in communities to make sure that we continue to improve. We will continue to improve, Mr. Speaker, without a doubt.

We have a Province of over half a million people. When you look at the amount of infrastructure we have, fifteen hospitals, twenty-two community centres, 119 community clinics, and twenty-three long-term care facilities, since 2004 we have continued to improve and build on those services of \$1.5 billion in health care infrastructure, including some of those facilities I have talked about, repairs and renovations to existing facilities. All of that and even more so, even new equipment – based on technology in the medical field, new equipment, and new drug formula. Again this year we added, I think, two new drugs to our drug formula just to make sure that within our fiscal capacity, we are on the leading edge and we can do what we need to do in regard to meeting the requirements of those facilities.

We will continue to invest in these areas. They are extremely important to us. To those who question: Well, where did the money go? It is quite clear. We have invested in people, we have invested in infrastructure, and we certainly invested in our communities. We continue to do that without a doubt. It is very important to do it. It is about sustainability and maintaining our communities, and not only maintaining but growing our communities which is so important.

I mentioned earlier Seniors, Wellness and Social Development – I know the Member for Bay of Islands is really attentive there. He is really enjoying my talk. I know I only have eight minutes left. I know he is pretty excited, so I will try to finish off here now with a bang.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned before Seniors, Wellness and Social Development which was a hallmark now of the Premier in terms of bringing that together, developing it, and

focusing on healthy, active, and engaged citizens living in their own homes and making sure that we have age-friendly communities. I know in my area – talking about age-friendly communities and the support we have given to seniors groups in the Province in terms of various grants for healthy aging, healthy activity, all of those, there are a number in my district.

I certainly salute them and the seniors for all the work they do in terms of engaging and bringing youth together for various events, socials, and just being active, and even some seniors who live alone. I know that groups get together and get them out, and get activities a couple of times a week which is so important for both their physical and mental well-being. Hats off to them; those groups are all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Through the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development I mean there is great support given to them. We recognize the work they do. As a government we view that was money well spent as well, Mr. Speaker.

The other area in terms of Transportation and Works – we have done tremendous investments over the past number of years. Again, we will continue to invest this year in roads, infrastructure, all of those things we need to grow our Province both from an economic point of view and just for the people who live in all our communities, so that they have access to – whether it is to travel to education facilities, health care, wherever it is that we continue to invest and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, just to wind up, I had an opportunity to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. HUTCHINGS: I know they are pretty excited on the other side, but I will have a chance to get up again, so I will say stay tuned.

I just wanted to bring it all together and say, as a government, we have laid out, as I said when I started, a plan over the next five years recognizing the fiscal situation of the day. It is visionary. Basically as we go through each Budget over the next number of years, we set targets of where we expect to be. We will

follow that through. We have continued to invest and we will continue to invest over the next number of years in infrastructure, whether that is health care, education, transportation, our people of the Province, through all means that we have done in the past.

As I said, there is a great document here that answers the questions of those who ask: Well, where did the money go? Well, the money was invested, and it was invested in the people of this Province to make it a greater Province than what it is today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, as I said, it has been strategic investments. I talked a little bit about R&D, research, innovation, and how we are expanding into other industries as well, and growing a cluster in other areas, as well as supporting our traditional industries that is part of who we are, but we will use that collectively now with other industries we have developed to grow our economy, to continue the things we need to do to make sure that the future is bright for all of Newfoundland and Labrador as we move forward over the next number of years.

With this Premier, certainly with the Finance Minister and how he has laid it out, we have been clear, we will articulate our vision here in the House over the next number of weeks in regard to the Budget as we move into the summer and into the fall into an election. We will clearly lay it out for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As I said when I started, it will be about choices. Who do you think can lead this Province? Who do you think is the best team? Who has the vision? We will lay that out for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure they will make the decision when the time is right on who has the vision, who is going to continue to grow this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: – who has done it over the past ten years, and who is going to do it for the next ten.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I guess I am blessed to be able to stand here and speak to Budget 2015. I am not happy to speak to some of the aspects of Budget 2015, but I am happy to have the opportunity to stand here as the Member for Burgeo – La Poile and speak to this – my fourth Budget here in the House.

One of the things on this side that we have had the pleasure of seeing is – again, this is my fourth Budget. We have some members that this is their first Budget that they have been a part of. I know that they are excited and will get an opportunity to speak to it.

One of the things we passed on, and you can tell people how the process works. One of the things I have talked about is we will probably get a number of opportunities to speak to the Budget. So, generally what I have done in the past is speak generally to the Budget itself. I like to speak about my district, the effects of the Budget on my district, and hopefully what I would like to see.

We also get an opportunity to speak to our critic roles. In my case it would be Health and Community Services and the Department of Justice. So, I will get a number of opportunities. Unfortunately today, due to the time, I will only get an abbreviated opportunity to speak, but I do want to speak very generally to the Budget as a whole.

I listened to the member across the way, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, speak and talk about a number of things in his speech. One of them he just talked about was laying out this vision and what the government plans on doing, what their vision is for the future.

One of the things I found interesting, actually, we heard this Budget unfold last Thursday here in probably what was one of the longer Budget Speeches I have ever heard. It was long, but one of the things – of course, after the Budget was unveiled the ministers get an opportunity to do various media outlets.

One of the things that struck me was that the Minister of Finance, the head of Treasury Board, the person who is responsible for Finance, I guess you could say the economy in this Province, one of his quotes in an interview that he did, I believe it was on CBC – and this scares me as a citizen in this Province. He actually said: we have no control over the spot we are in right now. That is scary. That is a scary thought to think that this government, who tell us that we should trust in them, believe in them and trust their vision, right now they are saying, we have no control over where we are right now. I compare it to a ship, and right now there is no skipper is basically what is going on here.

The second question I have is, if you have no control, what are you doing over there? What are you doing over there? Seriously, it does not sound like you are needed. We want, I want, the people I would imagine in this Province want a government that will take control and make choices for the betterment of the people. Not one that will take control of government, reap the benefit of billions in oil royalties and then when they do not plan they say, don't blame us. I have no control on this. I do not have any idea how we got to this position, but trust me when I say things will be better in five years' time.

Quite frankly, I do not think that is going to work. I do not think that is going to work with the people of the Province when you try to sit there for ten years, when you reap the benefits of oil deals that you never negotiated, you never had a part of – you have more money coming in than any government in the history of our Province previously, more money, and then you sit there and say, sorry, we are going to get it right the next time. That is not acceptable.

We only have to go back a year to see how this government operates. It is a government that is obviously oil dependent. There was no plan. We sat here last year during Budget 2014 and it was like, well, it is a tough year this year but

wait until next year. Next year things are going to be great, things are going to be better. It is just a coincidence that it is supposed to be an election year, but things will be better next year.

Now this is next year. We are here and things are worse than they were the year before.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: Somebody just said the phrase, and it is perfect: kick the can down the road. Kick the can down the road, and that is exactly what is going on here.

If the best that the gentleman in charge of the finances of the pocketbook, the bank book of this Province can say is hey, we have no control over this. I would say it is time for you to vacate the premises and move on. Let somebody get in there who is willing to take control, willing to make the right decisions, willing to put the plan in place that the people of this Province want to see. It is something called responsibility.

Now, I heard somebody over there say, what is the plan? I do not know if it was the Attorney General. Now, this is a person – again, I am not going to get into it because this person may speak to the Budget, he may not, but we know that his intentions are not to be here the next time. We know that. We will see how that goes.

If he wants to talk about a plan, this is the gentleman who put us through Bill 29 where we spent a million dollars fixing up the mistake that he brought in and forced down the throats of the people of this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: Again, I would say, look, that was last week, we have been there. I want to talk about this week. I want to talk about the Budget.

Now, there are so many areas we want to get into. There is so much to cover off here. Unfortunately, I have a little bit of time left here now. One of the things I want to talk about, and this is a combination of both of my critic roles but a number of departments. One of the big things we have heard over the last number of

years is infrastructure announcements. I am going to list off just a couple.

There was the new courthouse in St. John's. There was the new courthouse in Stephenville. There was the Corner Brook hospital. There was the new penitentiary here in St. John's. I think there was a health facility out in Bonavista. That is just some of the big buildings. That is just some of them. I may be missing some.

Oh, I forgot one; we just talked about it in the House today: the Waterford, that great relic that was built in 1854 and is still serving the people of this Province today. It is a priority – mental health is priority in this Province, but we are not going to see that Waterford. I am willing to bet we are not going to see it until the next decade.

Why would I guess that? Because we heard the government say when our fiscal situation improves, then we will un-pause infrastructure builds and we will move forward. Well, according to the Budget, you are not going to see a better fiscal situation, because of their actions, until 2019-2020. So that is great news for the people of this Province to know that the infrastructure – they would stand up and they love to have the big press conference and make these big announcements and then there is nothing there and we are sitting there still waiting for it.

I was actually at one of the announcements. It was down in Courtroom No. 7, down at Atlantic Place. One of them was the new courthouse in St. John's. Now, let's not forget that when the announcement was made there were no details then. Not a single detail, just a big announcement. We are going to do this.

It is funny to note that when that announcement was made – someone can correct me if I am wrong – I am pretty sure that oil was roughly in the \$60 a barrel range, between \$60 and \$70. Roughly the same as what it is now. So you are telling us that that much changed between then and now.

Why did you even make the announcement if you did not have any opportunity – you knew you could not do it? Why would you do that to the people who are going to use this facility and work in this facility and rely on this facility?

Why would you do that? That is just one example there of an announcement.

Last year, we had the announcement about the courthouse out in Stephenville. Again, I have practised in the current courthouse in Stephenville, which is a horrible courthouse. Anybody who has ever been in there can tell you it is not great. There was a big announcement made. I believe a number of members on the other side flew out there. They had the big announcement: Yes, we have the new courthouse in Stephenville. Guess what? That one is on hold too.

Actually, I had a call from the media out in Bonavista; Bonavista is pretty upset because I know that their health care facility that they were promised in 2014 is on hold too. That one is on hold.

AN HON. MEMBER: Which one?

MR. A. PARSONS: Out in Bonavista. There was lots of talk in Budget 2014; Budget 2015, not so much.

Now, one more – and again, I am going to get lots of opportunity, not as much as the Member for Virginia Waters. I have to tell you, it is great to sit down and listen to someone with actual business experience talk about the economy of the Province. I have to tell you, it is great to hear somebody who actually knows business –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: – talk about the financial situation of this Province, talk about the economy of this Province. Do you know what? It is good. We have the luxury – we have the Member for Virginia Waters, but we also have our leader who has significant business experience as well and can talk about the economy. Because, do you know what? They have employed people, but that is another topic that we are going to have to talk about later. That is the thing called jobs. We have seen lots of them gone in the last little while, lots of them gone with this announcement and according to this crowd over here, there is going to be more gone in the next year but stay tuned for that.

On that note, given the time of the day, I am going to adjourn debate now, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: Seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that debate be now adjourned.

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, debate adjourned.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given that my colleague has adjourned debate and the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, 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.’

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2:00 p.m., Private Members’ Day.

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