



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVII

FOURTH SESSION

Number 13

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

Tuesday

May 12, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today I am pleased to hear members' statements from the Members for the Districts of Bellevue, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Bonavista North, Trinity – Bay de Verde, St. John's Centre, and Burgeo – La Poile.

The hon. the Member for the District of Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the graduating classes of 2015 in the great District of Bellevue.

On May 1, 2015 I had the privilege of attending the graduation at St. Joseph's All Grade School in Terrenceville. There were thirteen graduates. Then, on May 2, I had the opportunity to join my colleague, MHA for Placentia – St. Mary's and Attorney General, to attend the graduation of Crescent Collegiate in Blaketown, with eighty graduates.

This past weekend, May 8, it was my pleasure to attend the graduation of Tricentia Academy in Arnold's Cove, where there were thirty graduates. There are two other high schools in the District of Bellevue: Swift Current Academy, with ten graduates; and Fortune Bay Academy, with eight.

I want to congratulate and thank the principals, teachers, and staff of each school for the great work they do preparing the students for their future. Without your professionalism, these graduating classes would not have been a success.

I ask all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the graduating classes of 2015 on their accomplishment today and their years of hard work and dedication.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate Devin and Bob Benoit for their remarkable achievement of being amongst the strongest powerlifters in Canada. This incredible father-son duo provides each other the support and encouragement that is essential to excel in this sport.

With a first place win in the eighty-three kilo weight class, at the National Championships in St. John's last month, Devin is a three-time National Champion. We cannot wait to see how he does at the World Championships in November. His awesome numbers were squat, 518 pounds; bench, 297 pounds; and deadlift, 508 pounds.

Bob is extremely proud of his son's success and has great reason to boast, himself. Competing at his first nationals in the 120-plus kilo class and competing for the second time with his son, his numbers were: squat, 425 pounds; bench, 335 pounds; and deadlift, 518 pounds.

Without using any lifting equipment other than a belt, Bob placed in fourth place with a perfect lifting experience that was nine for nine in lifts.

Their commitment to chasing their dreams to gold together is truly inspirational to us all. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Devin and Bob and wish them the best of luck in their upcoming competitions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am sure you have all heard the riddle: “What’s the hardest thing about learning to skate? Answer: the ice.” Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that answer is about to change. The new answer is: competing against Crystal Gliders.

At the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Figure Skating Competition for thirteen years and under two members of Bonavista North’s own Crystal Gliders Figure Skating Club placed in the top six.

Stacey Wheeler of Greenspond and Amber Gray from Lumsden qualified to perform at Skate Atlantica at Halifax on March 28, 2015, competing against twenty-two other young ladies from the Atlantic Provinces. Surely a dream come true for the young athletes – representing their club and their Province at such a tender age. They are barely in their teens, yet both have been skating for over ten years under the tutelage of Claudia Drover, their coach and motivator.

Parents say both girls spend countless hours utilizing skating video and YouTube until they master the spins and jumps. Their natural ability, coupled with their desire to compete at a very keen level, has boosted their success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all hon. members to join me in congratulating Stacey and Amber on their recent success, and I am sure there is more of the same in the future.

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.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Danielle Seward of Heart’s Delight-Islington.

Danielle’s brother Shane was born in 1985 with a rare neurological disorder called Hypomelanosis of Ito. At that time, Shane was the first person to be diagnosed with this condition in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Unfortunately, Shane passed away in February 1995, at the age of nine.

Danielle and her parents, Bev and Clyde Seward, began fundraising for the Janeway when Danielle was only four years old. This year will mark Danielle’s twenty-third year participating in the Janeway Telethon. The first two years were alongside her brother Shane and the rest have been in his memory. Danielle volunteers countless hours each year for the Janeway and this is her eighth year as a telethon coordinator.

On May 1, family and friends gathered in Heart’s Delight-Islington for this year’s event, A Night for Shane. A night of great local entertainment. That evening alone raised over \$3,000. Through their efforts, the Seward family has raised over \$30,000 for the Janeway in Shane’s memory.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the Seward family for their continued fundraising efforts in Shane’s memory.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I am happy to acknowledge and congratulate the Froude Avenue Tenant Association that is having its AGM at the Froude Avenue Community Centre – in the heart of St. John’s Centre. The Association is poised to do incredible work to support their community.

Tenant associations plan activities for seniors, youth, and children. Among their activities are: social events and outings for seniors, after-school activities for youth and children, parties to celebrate special holidays. They organize events to celebrate the accomplishments of tenants, proudly spreading the news of successes in their community. They also make sure that folks who may be sick or in need of support are given that help.

The Froude Avenue Tenant Association works together with all members to identify needs in their neighbourhood and to come up with solutions that work. This is community building at its best. Many members of the Association have been long-time members dedicating hours and hours of volunteer work. As well, there are younger folks who join in. I want to thank these volunteers for the work they do to ensure that their community is safe and supportive for every member.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise today to recognize and congratulate the Piranha Swim Club, out of the Bruce II Sports Centre, in Port aux Basques on raising more than \$8,000 during their annual Swim for Hope on March 27. The Piranha Swim Club started in 2003. The current members are seven to sixteen years of age and the club is a member of Swimming Newfoundland and Labrador.

Swim for Hope is a provincial event held each year to raise money for the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Cancer Care Foundation. This is the Swim for Hope's nineteenth year. The charity event is a twelve hour relay and this year the local Swim for Hope team competed against six community challenge teams. These teams included teachers, local residents, parents of the Piranhas, and others. The event ended with more water fun, plenty of food and games for the participants.

The Swim for Hope Team, along with countless volunteers, did a tremendous job and are to be commended for their hard work and dedication for this worthy cause.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in extending congratulations to the Port aux Basques Piranha Swim Club on another successful Swim for Hope.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House today to recognize May 11 to 17 as National Nursing Week in Newfoundland and Labrador. The theme for 2015 is *Nurses: With you every step of the way*. This theme speaks to the broad scope of health services our nurses provide and this week is an excellent opportunity to recognize their contribution to our health care system.

We currently have 6,342 registered nurses working in our Province. This represents the second highest per population ratio for registered nurses anywhere in the country. Newfoundland and Labrador is also fortunate to have the highest per population ratio in Canada for licensed practical nurses, with 2,383 LPNs working in our Province.

Nurses play an invaluable role in our communities. With a vast array of duties delivered in a number of settings, from long-term care facilities and emergency departments, to frontline health services in schools and clinics, nurses are often the first point of contact for patients when they enter the health care system. Nurses also play an important role in post-secondary education, administration, research and policy. They are responsible for providing direct care to patients, mentoring new employees and students, and ensuring that everyone under their care is treated respectfully.

Nurses often act as emotional support and provide reassurance that helps ease the minds of patients and their families during difficult times. Our nurses demonstrate humility and empathy, as well as a tremendous work ethic and steadfast dedication to helping those who are most in need. We continue to support nurses by negotiating competitive collective agreements, implementing recruitment and retention initiatives, and providing financial support to nursing students.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our government's five-year strategy to reduce emergency department wait times, Budget 2015 includes an investment of \$938,300 to provide approximately seven new full-time triage nursing positions, which will make a real difference in ensuring all patients are assessed and triaged quickly by a qualified nurse upon arrival in emergency departments across the Province.

Mr. Speaker, we applaud every nurse working in our Province. I encourage everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador to recognize the tireless efforts of nurses during National Nursing Week, and to acknowledge their dedication to patients and to families.

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 the statement. We, as the Official Opposition, would also like to recognize May 11-17 as National Nursing Week. We also want to thank nurses for their hard work and their dedication to improving health care in our Province. They affect the lives of many patients and their families, and they are obviously invaluable in all our communities.

They are highly skilled individuals who contribute significantly to our health care system. Health care remains a top priority for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and nurses are a large part of that care.

We have some of the poorest health outcomes in Canada – the highest rates of diabetes, stroke, cancer, just to name a few. Our health care system needs to be more focussed on health outcomes, and I think we can continue and should be listening to nurses to hear what they have to say as front-line workers in our system. Nurses can and should play an important role in improving the health and wellness of the people of our Province.

So again, thank you to all the nurses here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, 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.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I am very happy and very pleased to be able to stand and recognize the nurses in our Province, both the Registered Nurses and the LPNs. They truly are the first line of defence in our health care system. They are the first ones that people interact with in our institutions.

I also want to recognize how overworked these nurses are, Mr. Speaker. Our institutions are understaffed, whether we are talking about long-term care or the hospitals. Our nurses are overworked. They cannot do the work that they really want to do in the positions that they are in. We should be utilizing them much better in primary health care and base them in the community.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the diverse range of outdoor recreational opportunities offered through our impressive network of family-friendly campgrounds and day parks has something to offer everyone. I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to encourage all members, residents, and visitors from far and wide to explore and enjoy Newfoundland and Labrador's great outdoors this summer.

Mr. Speaker, we may not always have perfect camping weather, but that certainly does not deter the thousands of campers who flock to our provincial campsites each year. In advance of

this year's camping season, we launched a new provincial campsite reservation service, designed to better meet the needs of outdoor enthusiasts Province-wide. Developed by renowned campsite management provider, Camis, the new service requires users to pay both the reservation fee and campsite fees at the time of reservation. This approach is designed to deter clients from failing to cancel reservations when they do not intend to show up.

The new service improves the customer experience in other ways as well. For example, users now have the ability to search based on campsite availability instead of campsite category and a more streamlined campsite numbering system has been implemented to replace the use of letters. In addition, the campers now have the option of paying for a vehicle entry fee at the time of reservation, thereby allowing for a speedier check-in upon arrival at the park.

The response to this new service has been overwhelming positive, Mr. Speaker. During launch week alone, more than 4,200 reservations were made through the service, and staff received a number of positive, unsolicited public comments on its ease and efficiency. The new system is working extremely well, and is expected to result in increased usage of campsites during the 2015 camping season.

Mr. Speaker, spring has sprung and the camping season is just around the corner. Seven of our thirteen provincial camping parks open for the season on Wednesday May 13 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: – followed by additional park openings May 22 and May 29. For anyone who has not already done so, I encourage you to visit the new reservation system at www.nlcamping.ca, book your campsite now, and get out and enjoy this Province's impressive network of provincial parks and natural areas this summer.

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 thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Certainly we can agree that Newfoundland and Labrador has immense beauty and pristine natural areas, and our provincial parks are a great opportunity for people to get out and enjoy outdoor recreational activities. Although it is disappointing that almost half of them will not be open even for the May 24 long weekend which is coming up, as the minister stated.

I certainly support more efficient ways of conducting government business. More services could be offered online, and it is good to see that you can now reserve online for camping at our provincial parks. One of the things I noticed when I went to the website, though, and tried to use it on my BlackBerry that it does not work for mobile. There is no dot mobile option at this point, so there is a way to make improvements so that people can have greater access.

As well, though, I think that we really do need to look at this year's Budget which does increase camping fees by 20 per cent and that there were cuts made to the Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve for interpretation. So, when you look at natural areas, we do not have another Mud Immortal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 for the advance copy of his statement today on parks. Mr. Speaker, at the same time, realizing that they have a reservation system; at times it does have issues. No doubt, the system is probably going to experience a little bit of overload. Usually it happens in the first week or so of the system use.

Mr. Speaker, we also encourage residents and visitors alike to use these parks wisely. They are

pretty much a provincial treasure of ours. We also have to note as well that because of the use of these parks, we believe there is a need for further study on the need for more parks in this Province. We do know that outdoor recreational activities are increasing.

Mr. Speaker, just to sum up, again we urge caution over the weekend. Keep in mind the road traffic this weekend is going to be very heavy and we urge safety. Practice safety, think safety first of all.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to note that May is Better Hearing and Speech Month in Newfoundland and Labrador, and across Canada.

Yesterday, I joined representatives of the Newfoundland and Labrador chapter of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, and other organizations, to officially sign a proclamation to that effect, in an effort to help promote awareness of hearing loss and speech-language disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to the prevention of hearing loss. It is the only organization in the Province which exclusively represents people who are hard of hearing. Since its inception in 1994, it has made steady progress in developing programs and services for its clientele.

The Provincial Government's Disability Policy Office works with all government departments, agencies and community organizations to develop policies and programs to help ensure the inclusion of all people in all aspects of society. Budget 2015 allocates continued operational funding for the organization, and we have also partnered with the Hard of Hearing Association on a variety of specific initiatives over the years.

Mr. Speaker, communication disorders such as hearing loss and speech language disabilities affect about 50,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador. Many people benefit from early detection, appropriate therapy, medical intervention, assistive technology, and inclusion strategies.

As many of you may know, I have dealt with a loss of hearing myself, and have worn two hearing aids for several years. Mr. Speaker, I believe –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: I hear what I want to hear.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, I have worn them for about thirty years. I will say to anybody who wears them, you would not survive without them.

The improvement in these devices, even over the past few years, has been remarkable, and I am fortunate to have been able to benefit from advances in assistive technology.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join with the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association – Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists, and the Hearing Instrument Practitioners Association, to help promote public awareness about hearing loss and speech-language disabilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I am happy to rise in this hon. House and recognize May as Better Hearing and Speech Month. This issue has been near and dear to the hearts of my household as my son is an audiologist here in the Province.

Such observances give us pause to reflect on the challenges those with communications disorders face, and to celebrate achievements in technology and programming to mitigate these challenges. Persons with communications disorders can experience exclusion in day-to-day interactions; interactions many of us take for granted. Given only one-in-five people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually uses one, point to the importance of raising awareness around communications disorders.

Speech-Language & Audiology Canada have launched a seniors' communications health campaign as part of this year's Speech and Hearing Month. They pointed out that, "People who have hearing loss are 2 to 5 times more likely to develop dementia." and that at least 30 per cent of people who suffer a stroke experience language loss thereafter.

As the minister stated, early detection and intervention is key. The recommended wait time for preschool children for therapy for a speech sound disorder is three to six months. As of July 2014, the wait time for children to receive treatment for speech-language pathology was seventeen months from the time of referral.

Government committed in Budget 2015 to improve wait times. Mr. Speaker, we hope that those wait times are improved for children with hearing disabilities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I thank the Hard of Hearing Association for their work. Bravo.

While listening to the minister talk about how hearing aids have improved and how fortunate he is to benefit from that, I am thinking about the many seniors with very modest incomes who cannot afford hearing aids and do not qualify for assistance. Many do not meet the very strict income criteria of the Provincial Hearing Aid

Program. Those who do qualify have to wait at least a year for an appointment with an audiologist before they can get their hearing aids.

We all know how difficult life can be, the frustration and isolation that can come with a hearing disability. So I urge the minister to look into these barriers for seniors who need hearing aids and to help seniors get the hearing aids that they desperately, desperately need.

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.

There are 182 contaminated sites in our Province. The Auditor General said that the financial liabilities of these sites should be included in the Province's financial statements, but we learned last night at Estimates that this work on the inventory has not been completed.

So I ask the Premier: The AG identified this over a year ago; why has this work not been completed?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we are following the advice of the Auditor General. The impacted sites liability assessment program actually has been ongoing for the last year, and I am happy to say in the House today that work has been completed. We will be submitting it to the Comptroller General and on to the Auditor General in the coming days and weeks as we vet it through.

So, that work has been done, and we look forward to releasing it to the public in the coming weeks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the AG said that government will ultimately have involvement in all contaminated sites in the Province. The Abitibi sites alone are estimated to be \$265 million.

So I ask the Premier: What is the total amount of the environmental liabilities in our Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to correct the Leader of the Opposition. The number he is referring to as a liability for Abitibi is a textbook quote in terms of a liability that has not been researched and found and work done on it. They just take a number out of the book just to put it down as a liability number.

Mr. Speaker, that site is being remediated; there is work being done on that site. So, we do not know what the exact cost is going to be at the end of the day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: With regard to the total cost, we will not know that either until the program –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: – assessment has been done, and we will release all that to the public.

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

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be some confusion on the minister's part here. Just a few minutes ago he said that the reports would be submitted, would be made public. I just mentioned that \$265 million.

Will the minister please clarify: Are the reports done or not? What is the value of the contaminated sites at Abitibi?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Again, Mr. Speaker, all the work has been done. The report will be submitted to the Auditor General in due course. That is going to happen in the coming days, and at the appropriate time that will be made public. I cannot be more clear than that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last year, government accepted all the pre-existing environmental liabilities at the Come By Chance refinery without knowing the extent of those liabilities. An environmental assessment has been planned – the minister just spoke to that. Last November, the minister said: We expect the assessment to happen in short order.

I ask the Premier: Has this environmental assessment been completed? If so, what is the extent of that environmental liability?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, just by way of an update, there was a commitment that there would be an assessment done. It is not completed yet, Mr. Speaker. It is ongoing. We are fully committed to make that available to the public, but it is not completed.

Bearing in mind, as well, that our commitment around the facility was – we had to make a choice around doing some work around assessing the environmental liabilities, which we believe, Mr. Speaker, it has been a long history and we think it is going to be okay. The other side of that was we either do that or we put 600 people out of work. We were not prepared to put 600 people out of work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, no one asked the question about putting 600 people out of work. What we asked was: What was the extent of the environmental liability? The minister clearly can answer that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: He talked about it last fall. He is still talking about it. The work is not being done.

Will the minister finally tell us: Who is actually doing this work?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, the terms and conditions of the sale of the refinery to the proponent was part of that. The environmental assessment was their responsibility.

We have taken responsibility in that liability agreement concerning the environmental issues around soil sediment, ground water, and surface water. That is all that we are responsible for, Mr. Speaker. The proponent that has taken over that site is responsible for everything else on that site.

Mr. Speaker, the liability agreement is for a ten-year period. If the company ceases to operate for more than one year, they assume all

responsibilities for the environmental impacts that are on the site.

That is the short of it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government ran a \$924 million deficit last year and is running a \$1.1 billion deficit this year.

I ask the Premier: If all of the environmental liabilities for their 182 contaminated sites were included in your Budget documents, how would this change the financial picture of the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, generally accepted accounting practices requires us to identify those liabilities, to have them on our books. I spoke earlier that the report is being finalized. It is going to be ready to present to the Auditor General.

Ms. Speaker, we will make that all public, but it will on our books as liability, not as a debt.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well just to clarify, this work has been ongoing – we understand from the minister that it is going to be soon or very soon.

Will the minister at least give the people of Newfoundland and Labrador some kind of time frame when they can expect this information? Is it a few weeks, will it be June, will it be May, will it be July? When will it be?

You are the minister of that portfolio, the Premier is sitting there. You really do not know

what the environmental liabilities are in this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about 182 sites that we have identified, that we have done the work on, we done the assessments on. Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of work that has gone into this.

Again, we are at the very final stages. It will be up to the Auditor General to have a look at that, get his set of eyes on that. When he is ready to release that, and when the government is ready to release that, we will do so when it is appropriate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I remind the minister, it was the AG who said it needed to be done. The new act to provide the public with access to information and protection of privacy, which was prepared by Justice Clyde Wells and his Committee, and which repeals Bill 29 received approval in this House, in committee level, on April 28. The new bill is of extreme importance to the people of this Province. It only takes the third reading in this House which can be accomplished today and signed by the Lieutenant Governor to make this bill law.

I ask the Premier: Why is your government delaying the passage of this very important legislation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, there is no delay on the moving forward of the legislation for the bill that the member is asking about. The standard procedure in this House is that we take bills through first reading, second reading, committee, third reading, and royal assent, and it happens at various stages. The last couple of days we just happened to be debating the Budget but he can expect that third reading on this bill will be coming, I would say, within the next three or four days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, 911 is the major life and safety policy in our Province. In Estimates this morning, I was denied an opportunity to probe the 911 Estimates. There are a number of questions that need to be answered.

I ask the minister: Is this the open and accountable government you are trying to promote or are you trying to hide behind Bill 29 one more time?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are very proud of the fact that it was our government that brought forward the 911 bill for this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: We are very proud of the service that we are providing all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with this bill.

There is nobody hiding, Mr. Speaker. As the member would know, in Estimates this morning, Estimates is intended for members of the committees to explore the government funds that have been appropriated for various departments. The member would also recognize, because he said himself towards the end: If you don't mind, I will move away from this now. I have some policy issues I want to raise on 911.

Estimates concluded at the end of a little over three hours, Mr. Speaker. Members who were present this morning can attest that I made the offer to the hon. member to have my officials and myself available for follow-up discussions on policy issues or we could debate it in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I am not sure about the minister, but when you transfer \$500,000 from the 911 to the government, that is a budgetary item; when you transfer \$150,000, that is a budgetary item.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister, seeing he shut it down this morning. It is a question they would not answer this morning. Mr. Speaker, you heard yesterday in Question Period emergency responders are asking for a dispatch system for 911. Your officials have continually said that a dispatch system would overwhelm the system and cause problems for the public service answering points.

I ask the minister: In openness and transparency, will you table the evaluation that you have completed to verify that the 911 system would be overloaded with dispatch callers? I ask you to table that report, as you used it publicly yourself.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we have established 911 in this Province as an emergency response, and the member opposite is fully aware because he is making the most protest of the current system of anyone in the Province.

The reality is that the system is set up so that emergency zones are established throughout all of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In those zones, they determine the agency that responds to calls when they arrive. Corner Brook and St. John's use the standard operating procedures that are consistent, Mr. Speaker, with

other jurisdictions across this country I might add.

When a call is received, it is then transferred to the first lead responder who makes a determination on whether other responders are required and then they follow through on that service. It is a very clear process, Mr. Speaker. I have outlined it on many occasions but it is clearly not an Estimates discussion, it is a policy political discussion that we are having here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, if I am the only one complaining, who is the fire chief from Pasadena who was on CBC this weekend? The fire chief from Cox's Cove is complaining, the fire chief in Meadows is complaining, the fire chief in Hughes Brook – Irishtown complained about not getting a call.

I ask the minister again: As you told all of the volunteer firefighters in this Province that we cannot have dispatch because it would overload, wouldn't you do the respect of those volunteers and table that report? I am sure that you would not make such a decision without having the report completed.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I accept the debate on policy and I expect a political debate, but I am certainly not going to sit here in this House and have the member suggest or insinuate that I, or anybody over here, have disrespect for firefighters in this Province. It is absolutely ridiculous.

We all have firefighters in our own communities and we value what they do every single day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: We go to events. We celebrate what they do in saving lives and responding to emergencies, Mr. Speaker.

This is a political debate, nothing more than that. Our government brought it forward. The member does not like it for his area and he is playing politics with the situation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services said they do everything they can for youth who have signed service agreements with the department. Clearly, there are gaps in service, if youth receiving services from CYFS are dying in the transition to adulthood.

I ask the minister: What action will you take on the Committee's recommendations to improve the transition for youth receiving services?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I would say to the member opposite, if he wants to come to my office, as he has done before, and have a briefing with regard to youth services, I would be more than happy to do so. We have made great progress in the last number of years, particularly since 2011 when we made improvements to the legislation. We continue to do improvements to that legislation and the work that is done around it.

He has to understand – I believe he understands it, but he would just rather not hear it – it is a voluntary service, so we can only do so much when a child turns into a youth at sixteen years of age. It is a voluntary service. We try to work with that individual to try to bring them in under our umbrella of services; however, it is a voluntary service. As I said, we have made great progress and I certainly hope to see that progress continue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, briefings are where they tell us what they are doing. In here is where we actually force them to do something.

Youth who sign themselves out of care face a considerable transition to adulthood. The fact that they require protective intervention in the first place speaks to the exceptional challenges they will face in transition. We can infer from the Committee's recommendations that transition supports are not adequate for vulnerable youth.

I ask the minister: Will you adopt the recommendations of the Committee to ensure youth transitioning out of care are adequately prepared?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, again, we strive as a department to make sure that transition goes as well as it possibly can. The member mentioned you are talking about vulnerable youth; you are talking about vulnerable children who turn into the youth age. We want to work with those individuals.

Again, it is a voluntary service. I do not know what the member is suggesting, whether we take those people and we make sure they have the services against their will. It is a very delicate piece of work, but we want to make sure that we work with other departments such as AES to be able to help with that transition so that person aging out of the child system going into 'youthhood', if I could use that term, that they are provided with every opportunity to make sure that that transition is successful, and we do that on a daily basis.

Again, I will go back to the progress we have made, particularly since 2011. We have made

great progress, and I hope to see more progress continue.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, in Budget Estimates for Justice this morning the Attorney General indicated that \$100,000 was being budgeted to research and develop a model for a domestic violence court in Labrador, but the Attorney General refused to commit to actually establishing a court in Labrador.

I ask the Attorney General: Will you commit now to ensuring that a domestic violence court is established in Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, this government has committed to reinstating or creating a domestic violence court in St. John's and also to extending that court to another site on the West Coast of the Island. As well, we have committed \$100,000 to do a study in Labrador to see what kind of a therapeutic treatment court might be the best suit for Labrador.

That is what the money is for, Mr. Speaker. The therapeutic treatment approach of these courts will be different for Aboriginal clients, because we would want to involve the community and the Aboriginal culture into that treatment. That is what the money is there for, Mr. Speaker, and that is what the government is committed to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I have asked several times this morning and I have asked again here now, the Attorney General has had several opportunities to clarify his government's plans for a domestic violence court in Labrador. All he has committed to was spending the money to research it. The people of Labrador are more interested in actually getting the court.

I ask the Attorney General again: Will you now commit to treating the residents of Labrador fairly and ensuring they actually get a domestic violence court as has been committed to the rest of the Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the people of Labrador are committed to just and fair treatment and the administration of justice, so is this department, so is the Department of the Attorney General. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we want to look very closely at what is the best kind of a model that suits Labrador; that is what we are doing here. Until such time as we have all of that put together, then we will decide what and where and when the court goes in Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, in the Auditor General's recent update of recommendations made since 2009 he noted that in 2010 he made a number of recommendations related to real estate regulations. Five years later he notes only half of these recommendations have been implemented.

I ask the Minister of Service NL: Why have you not taken action to implement those recommendations?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are no concerns with regard to the protection of the public, and we do take the Auditor General's comments certainly in context. We are doing the work that needs to be done around that.

What he was referring to more than anything was the – there are issues around the Automated Licensing and Enforcement Registration Tracking System. It is a system that we use through OCIO to track what is happening in the industry.

Mr. Speaker, the industry in Newfoundland and Labrador is only so big. We are able to do that work in other ways, but we need to upgrade that system. We plan to do that hopefully in the coming while. Right now, there are no budget recommendations around to enhance that system, and we are working towards that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds pretty non-committal to me.

Mr. Speaker, Service NL has held public consultations for amending the Residential Tenancies Act. It also held consultations for a statutory review on the workers' compensation.

I ask the minister: Why did you amend your insurance legislation so that agents no longer have to submit audits of their trust accounts without consulting with key industry stakeholders?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, again, we do certainly look at the Auditor General's concerns and we take them very seriously. We have the highest reporting standards in Canada for a Province. Provincially, we have the highest in Canada for reporting standards.

Mr. Speaker, we do have a small industry; similarly, we are a small Province. We are managing that industry very well, we believe. In terms of consultations, right now the changes that we have made are aligned with other jurisdictions in Canada.

The mainland companies that do business here in Newfoundland and Labrador were asking for this. The work that was being done before, companies that were based in Newfoundland and Labrador were doing that work, but the mainland companies found difficulties. It was difficult for us to make them be compliant with the legislation. We thought it would be easier –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, at yesterday's Estimates for the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, the minister would not commit to fill the promised position for the tourism officer in Labrador that has been vacant for two or three years.

So I ask the minister: Given that this position was to be filled within weeks of last year's Budget, why are you breaking your own commitment yet again to the people of Labrador?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have a number of resources that are serving the people of Labrador through my department, not only through the Tourism branch but through the old Innovation, Business and Rural Development branch. I am certainly quite happy with the level of service that we provide there.

As I said to the member yesterday in Estimates, my answer has not changed on that. There is a vacant position there and we are currently

assessing whether we will refill the position and in its current location, or whether we will fill it and move it into a different location, or whether we will not fill it at all. When I make a decision, I will gladly share it with him in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, Labrador has world-class attractions which speak directly to the kind of tourists we would like to see visiting our area, including a world heritage UNESCO site at Red Bay, a national park, and the finest hunting and fishing in all of North America, just to name a few. Yet, this portion of the Province has been ignored.

So, I ask the minister: Will you review this knee-jerk decision and hire a tourism officer for Labrador to help build on the region's tourism potential?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be more ridiculous than to suggest that we have ignored the opportunities for tourism in Labrador. We spend about \$13 million a year right now on advertisements, tourism ads that bring people to the Province, to the Island of Newfoundland and also to Labrador, Mr. Speaker. We have helped grow the tourism industry there because of significant investments by our government.

So, to stand here and suggest that we are ignoring tourism in Labrador is absolutely terrible and ludicrous. We will continue to invest in tourism in Labrador as we have always done and help grow the industry there as we do on the Island part of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, in the Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework, government set the following goals: promote the national goal of a 10 per cent increase in physical activity among seniors and explore the feasibility of provincial seniors' games.

I ask the minister: To what degree has your department achieved these important goals for seniors?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I think all the hon. member has to do is to look at our record of investments in seniors, from seniors rec grants to seniors' wellness grants. Take a look at some of the funding that we have approved over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, just to see how active our seniors are in Newfoundland and Labrador. That speaks to the record itself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South has time for a quick question.

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, seniors have seen a significant increase in their fees to participate in swimming programs at provincial pools. The fees have gone from \$20 to \$50 for a twenty-session swim pass, much higher than municipal rates in Mount Pearl and Conception Bay South. Wellness programs and physical activity for seniors promotes healthy living.

I ask the minister: Why are you defying your own healthy aging framework by making it too expensive for seniors to use provincial pools?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development has time for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I will answer in line with what I responded to yesterday. The pools that he is talking about are three that have a unique arrangement. These three pools now we have brought in line comparable and in some cases lower than all the other jurisdictions across the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yesterday, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills told this House that the government is reorganizing health care through consolidation into one entity as has happened with the school boards.

I ask the Premier: Will he confirm that Budget 2015's plan for a stand-alone shared-service organization of the regional health boards is actually consolidation into one health authority?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I obviously have to begin by thanking the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills for answering the questions yesterday.

To be clear, what we said during the Budget and what I have said numerous times since in this House is that we are going to consolidate back office administrative functions of the four regional health authorities and the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information. It will be a stand-alone public body. It will improve the efficiency of our health care system and allow our regional health authorities to focus on what they are in place to do, which is deliver quality health care to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: I invite the minister to read Hansard, Mr. Speaker, and hear what the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills said. He said it would be the same as we have done with the school boards. What they did with the school boards was one school board. I want a straight answer and the people want a straight answer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Are you headed towards one health authority Premier?

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 have unique geography in this Province. Our population is dispersed despite the fact that we only have just over 500,000 people in this Province. If we had intended to consolidate the entire regional health authorities, we would have done so.

We believe the best structure for health care and health care delivery in Newfoundland and Labrador is the one that we have proposed. It will allow the four regional health authorities to focus on their real mandate, which is delivering health services, while consolidating the back office stuff and finding efficiencies in information technology, finance, payroll, marketing and communications, areas where it makes sense for the health authorities to work together and act as one.

It is a sensible approach, but she is probably against that too, 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.

I ask the minister, since they are using what happened with the school boards as the model – that is what the minister said – I ask: How much did the government save in creating the one English speaking school board for the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, there will be real savings by consolidating back office functions within our regional health authorities, functions like purchasing and human resources, to name a couple of others. We are going to create a stand-alone shared services organization that will work closely with our regional health authorities. As a result, there will be significant savings.

This has nothing to do with school boards, Mr. Speaker, and the member opposite knows that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, documents related to the operations of the new 911 service in the Province reinforced the term two-tiered. There is a distinct difference between a call taker and a dispatcher.

I ask the minister: Why the two-tiered set-up of 911 in the Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the member is getting his information.

In fairness to the Member for Bay of Islands, we had a good discussion on 911 today. The member who asked the question did not attend

the Estimates, but clearly he is missing information to ask that kind of a question. There is no two-tiered system.

About fifteen minutes ago I outlined the process of how calls are received and transferred, and that is the process. If regions of the Province and municipalities of the Province choose to add on to that service, it is well within their jurisdictional responsibility, but the Province does not offer a two-tiered system. We offer one level with common standard operating procedures across the entire Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East has time for a quick question.

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, shouldn't the department worry first over giving everyone the same 911 service as we have here in the Northeast Avalon? That is the question everybody is asking.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services has time for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we have done exactly what the member is asking. We have made 911 available across the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: It seems to get the Opposition members going, the fact that they did not bring the policy forward. It was our government who took the forthright and the initiative and the vision to do it.

We have a consistent service across the entire Province, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure where the member is getting misinformed in his questions.

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.

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.

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

WHEREAS the communities of New Ferolle, Shoal Cove West, and Reefs Harbour have always relied on the fishery as a means to earn a sustainable income; and

WHEREAS the main employer for these three communities has been a seafood processing plant located in New Ferolle; and

WHEREAS this plant was seized by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of mortgage arrears; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador then permitted an outside operator to operate the plant but that operator became insolvent and closed; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador then sold the plant to another operator for the sum of \$1 and has not operated the plant but instead has stripped most, if not all, of the equipment from the plant instead of operating it;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to find a local

operator for this plant so that people can go back to work

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, in the community of New Ferolle, there is excellent infrastructure where people can carry on the fishery in a modern, contemporary, small-scale multi-species plant. There is a significant sized cold storage. It is an older plant that has been used for a variety of buying purposes, there is an office building, and there is a fish plant. The fish plant is the one that was expropriated – not expropriated, it was repossessed by government.

The government has let this go through a succession of owners and none of the owners have had very good results. In the most recent go around, the plant has been sitting vacant, sitting idle, licences are assigned to that community, to that operator with no work, nothing happening for the people in the community.

The people are looking for employment. If this plant were operational it could probably employ on a large-scale basis maybe 150 to 200 people, but on a small-scale basis thirty or forty or fifty people throughout the entire season. This is a plant that the Province seems to have washed its hands of and it is providing absolutely no direction whatsoever in order to get this moving.

This is a petition from the people of the three communities – New Ferolle, Reefs Harbour, and Shoal Cove West – requesting that the government take action and move forward on this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government has a responsibility to ensure that Internet access is broadly available so people have the right to be able to access the Internet in order to exercise and enjoy their rights to freedom of expression and opinion and other fundamental human rights; and

WHEREAS the Town of Goose Cove still remains without broadband services; and

WHEREAS residents rely on Internet services for education, business, communication, and social activity; and

WHEREAS wireless and wired technologies exist to provide broadband service to rural communities to replace slower dial-up service;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to assist providers to ensure the Town of Goose Cove is in receipt of broadband services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by all residents there from Goose Cove.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: I would just like to say that I have presented a number of petitions on broadband Internet in the House of Assembly, but they are dwindling in the numbers that I can present. There are really two towns, Goose Cove and Bide Arm, that are still without service.

Goose Cove has a significant opportunity when it comes to looking at broadband service and when it comes to business development in the town. It would be a great opportunity to establish new business to provide taxation base in that town to help for sustainability. It is just 7.9 kilometres from the Town of St. Anthony.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: When you talk about growing population and growing economy and talk about creating sustainable communities, advancing broadband Internet is one of those. We have a real opportunity here to work with providers, to work with private and community economic development groups to lever and put together a good proposal and see that happen for those eighty-four householders in Goose Cove, so that they could have broadband Internet as other communities in the region.

Government has invested in seeing communities outlying St. Anthony right now – this will come on stream in just a couple of weeks. Hopefully we will see that move forward when it comes to Goose Cove as well. I did not see any mention to broadband Internet in the Speech from the Throne or the Budget, but I do understand that there is money that could carry forward.

I hope to see greater partnerships happening in advancing business in the region. I look forward to having further discussion with the Minister of Business on this particular matter on behalf of my constituents of Goose Cove.

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.

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

WHEREAS computer science is the new literacy, and is a vital skill for the digital age; and

WHEREAS computer science is a growing field of employment, and is one of the highest paid academic majors; and

WHEREAS computer science education in Newfoundland and Labrador is not keeping pace with computer science education in other provinces; and

WHEREAS the public education system has a duty to expose students to a wide variety of subject areas and careers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to consider adding mandatory computer science subjects to the public education curriculum.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I am very honoured today, Mr. Speaker, to stand on behalf of the Code NL, the organization that has been circulating this petition. It has been a while since they have sent the petition to me, and I am very happy to once again stand and speak of the concern that people have that they themselves and their children are not getting the opportunity for a full education in this age of technology.

Code NL has been studying this issue and knows well that we need to be training more people locally in computer science, because the demand will increase here and computer science will contribute to the economy. Code NL says we are way behind other provinces; our education curriculum is not keeping pace.

There are two unrelated courses in the system: one, which is a course that is offered in a handful of urban schools; another is a course in robotics that is offered in twenty schools in the Province. These are just individual courses. We do not have a real computer science curriculum; whereas in Ontario, they have ten interrelated computer science and computer technology courses in Grades 10 to 12 offered in a sequence.

So I encourage the Minister of Education to bring us up to date in this Province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Town of Conception Bay South is the second largest municipality in the Province with a population of approximately 26,000 people; and

WHEREAS recent dangerous incidents on community streets have highlighted concerns of high speed and inadequate traffic control in Conception Bay South; and

WHEREAS residents, organized groups, and the town continue to raise awareness about pedestrian traffic along main streets and the lack of police presence in Conception Bay South; and

WHEREAS residents are increasingly concerned about safety in their community;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to review the level of policing in Conception Bay South, with an objective of increased policing services and improving public safety for residents.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition I have brought forward on several occasions. I would just like to start right from the very beginning and point out that in no way am I criticizing the work that RNC officers do in the Town of Conception Bay South. They continually present themselves in a most professional manner as they go about their daily work in making Conception Bay South a safer place for all of us to live.

In speaking with residents, I feel the issue here is tied more to the degree of policing, the perception of residents, and the visibility of police in the community, Mr. Speaker. Time and time again residents will talk about never having seen a police car go up their street.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is fully aware of that because, obviously, at one point he was a

member of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. He was a ward councillor in the Town of Conception Bay South. I know as the MHA for Topsail, that members of council in Conception Bay South have continually kept him in the loop about their concerns of policing in the community.

Mr. Speaker, at one point in time the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary had a neighbourhood policing office in the Town of Conception Bay South. That has been phased out since –

AN HON. MEMBER: In Manuels.

MR. HILLIER: In Manuels, that is right, Cherry Lane. That has been phased out since 2013 and has really not been replaced.

The Minister of Justice will tell us that the philosophy of our local police force has changed and is now focused on intelligence-based policing, as opposed to community-based policing, which was the way the police force focused when we had our own little substation there in Conception Bay South. Mr. Speaker, this may very well be the case, but it does not make any difference to the people of Conception Bay South as they are still concerned about not seeing a regular police presence in the community.

Mr. Speaker, as I have gone through the community, there are two areas of focus. One is the whole concept of –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the hon. member his time has expired.

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

I will get the rest in next time.

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, I have been up numerous times over the last couple of years on this petition for the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and indeed the people of all Labrador who travel this stretch of highway, and I will continue to do that. Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: In Question Period today there were some questions around a tourism development officer for Labrador. My colleague for Humber West talked about the tourism opportunities there. I am going to be talking about that later today. It is all part and parcel and it fits together to entice tourists to come into the area and for us to get in on that one billion dollar industry that the Premier talks about is a priority for him and this Province. Mr. Speaker, we have to have roads that are safe to drive on.

I went on the website today for Transportation and Works, and several lines there in the things they value, safety was at the top. Well, I can tell

you, Mr. Speaker, that anybody, especially people who are not familiar with just how dilapidated that the road is, it is decades beyond its expiration date. If you get off the ferry after dark, that is if you can get through the ice, and you get off and you are driving that road, you are taking your own life in your hands. It is a very serious threat to safety.

Mr. Speaker, I said it here before and I will say it again, where is Route 510 on this government's list of priorities? Where is it? Because if they are out doing roadwork and they are allocating resources according to need and there is a stretch of road in the Province that is worse than this, I would love to go and see it. I would love to go there.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the children who are bused every day on this road. My heart goes out to the people with broken femurs who have to travel by ambulance on this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: It is time for us to get our priorities in order and to let these people know where they are on the list of priorities for roadwork because the road is in an extremely bad shape, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the encouragement from members opposite.

At this time we will call Motion 1 from the Table, that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Motion 1. We will resume debate on the Budget Speech, debating the sub-amendment.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Kilbride.

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if I had a wall or something here so I would not be drifting over away from the microphone. I think this comes from my teaching days where you would be up talking to a class and you would wander around all over the place.

I want to address some of the comments made last week about unemployment and employment here in this Province. We were kind of accused as a government of creating unemployment problems here, that we have done nothing to stimulate the economy or to create jobs.

I want to go back to the year 2000, that is fifteen years ago. At that time, in 2000, the unemployment rate here in Newfoundland and Labrador was 16.6 per cent.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. DINN: It was 16.6 per cent.

It was a very difficult time to find a job. Graduate students from MUN and the trade schools were vying or competing with other people for truck driving jobs. They were looking for delivery jobs and department store jobs.

I mentioned before in the House of Assembly, there was a company on Topsail Road that advertised for a van driver's job in the local media. Five hundred people showed up at the door of that company looking for that job. Some of the people who showed up were people with university degrees and other trades.

In those days it was not uncommon to see a dozen people or more every morning at construction sites looking for a job. Also, in

those days there were many, many – you would not see help wanted signs like you do today. If you look around today you will see a lot of help wanted signs. These signs are at take-outs and other food establishments. You will find them at home care facilities; farmers are even looking for workers.

It was only recently I had been talking to a young farmer who spent months looking for someone to go to work on his farm. After several months, he did find somebody he could hire. I have had other farmers phone me, saying, do you know anybody I can hire to take a job to go on the farm? I have had companies, when I walk in their yard or something, or see them at a facility or at a business somewhere else, they say, do you know anybody looking for a job? Very often, you did not know anybody because they were not there. This was not the case years ago.

Back in the 1990s, it was difficult for students to find a job. I taught school for many years and during those times it was rare to have five or six people in your class who worked after school, people who had a part-time job.

Today that is not the case. Today any student who wants to work can probably find part-time employment. Very often it is not difficult for them to get summer employment either. That was not the case ten or fifteen years ago. It is interesting to note too that many of those students who do work are helping to finance their own education, which is very good. I think it helps them avoid debt later on in life for their schooling.

Last week, I spoke to people at the Goulds Recreation Committee. Myself and the Member for Ferryland were at a volunteer reception for young people at the Goulds Recreation Committee. Some of those people told me that it is getting increasingly more difficult every year to get staff for summer employment to staff their programs.

Ten or fifteen years ago, this was not the case. In those days, ten or fifteen years ago, it was not unusual to have ten times more resumés than the jobs that you had available. People in the Kilbride recreation program tell me the same thing; it is getting harder to get young people to

go to work in the summertime. So there is work out there.

It is also interesting to look at the unemployment statistics for this Province in previous years to get a true perspective of today's situation. Did you know that in 1985 the unemployment rate was 20.2 per cent in this Province? In 1992, 1993, and 1994 it was still 20 per cent. In 1995, 1996, and 1997 it was 18 per cent or a bit higher. In 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003 it was 16 per cent and a bit higher.

In 2004 it was 15.6 per cent and for the next nine years, it went progressively downwards to 12.3 per cent. In 2013, 2014 it was below 12 per cent for the first time in many, many, many, many years, probably the first time ever since they started keeping statistics. Actually in April this year, this past month, we had a modest gain in employment in this Province.

It is also interesting to note that if we have such a serious unemployment problem, we note that we are bringing in temporary foreign workers. Why would you bring in temporary foreign workers if there is no unemployment problem, or if there is one? You would be looking at your own environment to solve your problems; you would not have to bring people in. To me, the fact that we have to do this means that the unemployment problem is probably what it always was for the last number of years. No matter what happens, I do not think that you will get the unemployment figures down much below ten, no matter what we do.

There are also accusations that we ruined the economy. Remember, we are part of a global economy, subjected to the ups and downs of foreign commerce. If the Chinese do not want to buy iron ore or they want to pay a lower price for it, then you know what happens. Oil prices went down; you cannot blame the Premier of this Province or this government, especially the Minister of Finance, for the fact that oil has gone down. You might say that you should have predicted it, but I am sure, like some of us have said in the last few days, Saskatchewan, Alberta and those people are in the same boat. None of them knew how to predict either, so you could only make a guess at what it was going to be.

From what I can see also, it is just not just rabbit and partridge populations that are cycling. I think the economies are also cycling. If you look over the last number of years you can see periods of time when the economy was up, followed by a few years when it went down. This has been going on for as long as I can remember.

Back in the 1980s and the early 1990s I had a landscaping business. During that time, in the 1980s things were booming. I write everything down, as you probably noticed –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. DINN: You noticed now, did you?

Anyway, during those times I used to have a book with two or three pages that I could never keep up on. I always had work, work, and work. A few years after, in the early 1990s, she went that way; I would have two or three items in the book that I had to do. That went on for a few years, then it went up again, then it came down again. It went up and now it is down again for a few years. I believe myself that we are in an environment now where some of the stuff that we have done in the past, we are much better off than we were when we had the last real bad downturn.

I think that we are cushioned now for a quicker recovery actually. I do not think it is going to last five years. I think that in three years' time you are going to see things getting much better.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. DINN: You can write that down if you like.

The fact that economies are cycling is reality; this is nothing new. Budget 2015-2016 deals with issues. This government is dealing with issues. I am glad to see that our Premier –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. DINN: I am having difficulty to hear myself here now.

I am going to wait until I get attention again now.

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

MR. DINN: Budget 2015-2016 deals with issues. Our government deals with issues. The present Premier is dealing with issues. The size of the public service in this Province was a big issue. People have said it is too large. Experts say that our public service is too large. We have more public servants per capita than any other province in this country.

In the Budget year like we had coming, in the crunch that we had, we found ourselves in the situation where our first reaction could have been layoff a lot of people, send them out the door, but we did not do that. Now, there are some people, some groups around that would have been happy that we did that, but we did not do it. As a government we decided to approach the size of public service with an attrition plan, an attrition plan that does not lay off 1,200 people today or tomorrow. Actually, if it was not an attrition plan and we had planned to cut 1,200 jobs, they would be gone now. They would have got their yellow slips or their pink slips last week.

So, these people would have been gone. We decided that we would cut the public service as people retired, and this would allow us and allow people more time. People do retire, and I think the Attorney General mentioned yesterday that 400 to 500 people retire per year from the public service. So, this attrition plan should work, knowing how many people do retire.

Losing 1,200 jobs or employees all at once would have a tremendous negative impact on the commerce of this Province. Can you imagine the trickle-down effect of 1,200 people not having jobs, losing their jobs all of a sudden? These are people who are buying houses, buying cars, buying groceries, buying, buying, and buying. We would have lost all this economy –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. DINN: It will be back, don't you worry.

Two or three months prior to the Budget, I had a number of people working in the public service contact me. They contacted me by phone. I met a number of them over in the cafeterias here in the Confederation Building. I visit the cafeteria

very often. I think I eat four or five times a day when I am here at Confederation Building, so I run into people fairly often. Some of those people were able to come to me and tell me they were very, very worried, prior to the Budget coming down, that they were going to lose their jobs – very concerned. They thought they were going to be out the door any time.

I spoke to some of them on the phone and I talked to others, like I said, in the cafeteria and other places outside these buildings. These people were worried to death. I am glad to say that after Budget day these people still had their jobs, especially those at the lower end of the seniority scale, the young people who would have been the first to go if layoffs had to occur. These would be the young people just starting their lives, just starting their employment lives. They would have been devastated.

I know a couple of these young people in my district. They had gone back to school, they had gotten off Income Support, and they were very, very happy working. If they had to be laid off they would have been devastated. I can tell you that now, I know. I do not know how they would have dealt with it.

We also had an issue with public pensions. This government has taken a leadership role in finding a solution to the liability associated with pension benefits that would have severely impacted the Province's net debt. Over the past year we have worked with unions to formalize agreements that protect the defined benefit plans for approximately 97 per cent of plan members.

We are going to continue work in 2015 and 2016 to address the remaining unfunded pension liability. I think that is tremendous. When you look at figures that we had last year and the year before, given to us about public debt, a big part of that public debt was pension liability. We have taken steps to address this.

Budget 2015-2016 puts a plan in place for fiscal recovery. We have mapped out a strategy for going forward with an emphasis on trying to stop deficits to reduce debt, and we put in a generation plan with seed money set aside for future downturns in the economy. This is facing problems head on and making corrections when they are needed. We saw, as a government, that

we had a problem and we found a way to deal with this problem.

Budget 2015 and 2016 could have been much worse. We could have cut many existing programs. In a budget situation like we found ourselves in we could have balanced the books by raising taxes – a lot more than was done – by cutting services, and laying off employees. We took a more balanced approach.

Programs for seniors are mostly still in place. Funding for community groups stayed the same. Tuition freezes and needs-based grants are still in place, or still around for secondary students. There is still a free textbook policy in place for K to 12 students in all of our schools. Drug programs are untouched, some are actually enhanced.

The Rent Subsidy Program is funded again, helping many people. I do not know how many of you people realize the impact of a Rent Subsidy Program. If we put a million dollars in rent subsidies, you are helping probably anywhere from 150 to 250 people with each million. We have gotten \$9 million or \$10 million into rent subsidies. It could be more than that. I am not sure of the exact number. So you multiple 150 or 200, probably use 200 as a round number and times that by ten and you will know how many people you are helping. These are vulnerable people, people who do need the help, people who are finding it hard to exist in this economy.

Skill trades programs are included in the 2015-2016 Budget with improvements. Grant programs for farmers were not cut. Farmers can still apply for a Growing Forward 1 program, Growing Forward 2. It is very important for farmers.

The Land Consolidation Program is still funded. For those of you who are not aware of the importance of that program, the Land Consolidation Program is there to help people, who have farmland they do not use anymore, sell it to the Province and then the farmers can use it. It is good for the people who have the land, who have land that is zoned agricultural and probably will remain zoned for a long, long time, and it also helps farmers who are looking for land.

I was very interested yesterday when the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Forestry – you have a lot of titles – mentioned in the House of Assembly that they are now working on plans to address the issue of food security, a pet peeve of mine. We bring in about 90-odd per cent, roughly 90 per cent of the food that we use in this Province. Having a plan in place to address that is very, very important.

I do not know how many of you are aware of it, but if the boat stopped bringing food here there would not be too many days before you would be short. I would not, okay. A lot of you people would not have food.

AN HON. MEMBER: You would share with us.

MR. DINN: No, you would not come to my place because it is well guarded.

I should also mention that Budget 2015-2016 could have eliminated all infrastructure spending. We had an adequate excuse to say we cannot do any more, but we did not do that. We still chose to do roadwork, to build some schools, ferries, but we did have to put aside some of the large projects until the slowdown is over.

People are complaining that we have not started the Waterford Hospital. We have not built a prison. We have not done the hospital in Corner Brook. The hospital in Corner Brook is on the way. It will take time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. DINN: Yes, it will.

The west end high school was four or five years getting done. It will be open this year. It does not happen all of a sudden. You are talking many millions of dollars, a lot of money. We are not in a position to take all of this stuff on today. I suppose we could have borrowed and had a \$3 billion debt, but we did not.

Budget 2015-2016 could have been worse, like I said before, but we chose to take a balanced approach. I am glad we did.

My time is nearly up. I have seventeen seconds – fifteen, fourteen.

Thank you very much for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for Kilbride is a hard act to follow.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand this afternoon and represent the people of the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde and take some time to talk about Budget 2015.

First, I am going to talk a little bit about my district. I guess some of the ramifications of Budget 2015 on my district and some of the issues that I found in my district in the short time I have been the member, since November, about six months, I guess.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at Trinity – Bay de Verde, the major issue always comes back to the fishery. One thing I have seen in my time around the House of Assembly in the last year or so, first as a staff person, was the co-operation between all three parties when it came to the inshore shrimp.

Inshore shrimp, Mr. Speaker, in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde is huge. The economic impacts that we face every day are beyond compare I guess to most districts in the Province. I am just going to give you some numbers.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at the report of the FFAW, in Bay de Verde last year there was 3 million pounds of shrimp landed; in Old Perlican, 3.3 million pounds of shrimp. Alone, shrimp in Old Perlican and Bay de Verde accounted for over 6.3 million pounds. The economic impact of this to the local district and to the economy of the Bay de Verde Peninsula – Routine Maintenance and Fuel in 2014: Old Perlican there was a total of \$515,000; Bay de Verde, \$418,000; and Hant's Harbour, \$22,000.

These are small municipalities, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the tax base of these municipalities – you look at Bay de Verde for example. Bay de Verde's tax base is 44.5 per cent revenue from commercial taxes. I can assure you that is all fish plant. Other than one or two small local stores, 44.5 per cent of the tax base in Bay de Verde is the fishing industry. When you go and look at Old Perlican, it is a little bit of a larger town, and a bigger commercial tax base. Even so, 39.8 per cent of the tax base in Old Perlican comes from commercial enterprises.

As our population ages, we also look at these communities again. I do not mean to single out these two communities, but these two communities are so important and this industry is so important to our district. Mr. Speaker, 46.2 per cent of the people in Bay de Verde work directly in the fishing industry. In Old Perlican, it is 43.9 per cent of the working population.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. CROCKER: It is 43.9 per cent in Old Perlican work in the fishing industry.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage government, the Opposition, and the Third Party to stay working diligently for the shellfish industry in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, also in Budget 2015 there was some more money allocated for the Heart's Content Cable Station, the Provincial Historic Site. The renovations have started there over the winter. They are continuing on the exterior and they are nearing completion.

MR. A. PARSONS: (Inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: Well, that is coming, I say to the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

I was a little disappointed to learn yesterday in Estimates, Mr. Speaker, that under the heading of special celebrations there has been no money directly earmarked for the 150th anniversary of the landing of the first transatlantic cable, which would be next year, 2016. So, I encourage the minister and I encourage the government to look at the 150th anniversary of the transatlantic cable in Heart's Content, and ensure that the proper

funding is in place next year for those celebrations.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Burgeo – La Poile just reminded me of a picture that I took back late last fall. It was in front of the cable station – 149 years since the transatlantic cable was landed – ironically that was somewhat the birthplace for telecommunications in North America, and now it is a dead zone when it comes to cellphone coverage. The District of Trinity – Bay de Verde has little or no cellphone coverage in 2015.

We talk about economic diversification as we look around. One of the failures of this government over its twelve years in office is a failure to diversify the economy, because one of the things that is so important in rural economies is cellphone coverage. Again, cellphone coverage was not mentioned in Budget 2015.

Mr. Speaker, another issue I hear lots of in my district, both from individuals and municipal councils, is their inability to access Crown lands for future development. Now, I know the minister a couple of weeks ago addressed this in an announcement, and I do hope that the Department of Municipal Affairs addresses this issue as soon as possible to ensure that municipalities and private business people in districts, in rural districts, have the ability to develop.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I would be remiss if I did not take advantage of some of these nice, glossy documents provided to us by the government at taxpayers' cost. I was impressed on Budget day, there was – it was about that thick, a nice, glossy document. Let me just cherry-pick a bit around a few of them. I will not go in too deep, but I will cherry-pick some stuff.

The first one, obviously the title of the Budget is *Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*. Twelve years in, the government now decides that they are going to balance our choices for a promising future. Mr. Speaker, here are some of the highlights of Budget 2015. This is the government's document; these are some of the highlights of Budget 2015. The deficit for 2014-2015 projected at mid-year was \$916 million; revised upwards, \$924 million. That is a result,

according to this glossy document, of the decrease in oil revenues.

The ironic part, Mr. Speaker, when oil was \$103 a barrel back in the spring or late winter of 2014, this government in its last Budget projected a deficit of over \$500 million. So even when oil was at its highest, oil was at its highest peak or some of its highest peak, \$103 a barrel or somewhere in that vicinity, we were looking at a Budget deficit last year of over \$500 million. This was not sprung on us overnight. This has been coming for a while. It is like the freight train.

Budget 2015 outlines a five-year fiscal recovery plan. I guess, Mr. Speaker, we are going to recover from the twelve years of mismanagement. I would think it is a five-year plan to recover from the past twelve years. By the way, we are going to return to surplus in 2020 and 2021. Again, that is on projected oil revenues. The Member for St. John's East pointed out yesterday afternoon that looking that far into the future at oil revenues is probably not a safe bet – is that fair, Mr. Murphy?

After ten years of significant growth, economic conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador have weakened but they are expected to rebound by 2019. It is good to know. Mr. Speaker, the government produces a five-year plan for recovery, and I think it is a five-year plan from recovery of twelve years of mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, one move the government did make in Budget 2015 was an increase in the HST, 2 per cent. The HST, being obviously a consumption tax, is going to affect each and every one of us in this Province. It is going to take an already slower economy or a slowing economy and slow it even more. It is going to affect those in society: our seniors, our lower income people; they are the ones going to be affected the most. I know, Mr. Speaker, that the government is going to tell us oh no, that is okay; we are going to give them back that money in October with a \$300 tax credit and we are going to increase the threshold.

Mr. Speaker, for the senior paying a heat bill in February or the parents buying sneakers and school supplies in September, that \$300 in October is not going to help. That \$300 cash

infusion in October is not going to help the other eleven months of the year.

Mr. Speaker, the government also made a move in this Budget quickly to remove the Residential Energy Rebate. Again, that is another move that is going to affect likely our seniors and most vulnerable again.

Mr. Speaker, I think a week before the Budget the Member for Conception Bay South entered a private member's motion for a seniors' advocate, similar to the Advocate we have for children in our Province. It was astonishing that day to hear the members opposite say how – one member, I think it was the Member for Exploits, made the comment that we do lots for seniors. Mr. Speaker, we can never do enough for our seniors. They are the people who have built our economies; they have built our communities. So when it comes to providing for our seniors, I do not think we can ever do enough.

I am going to put down this little glossy document and go yet to another one, same title, *Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*. I am going to go to 2015 Expectations: Economic growth is expected to remain subdued in 2015. Real GDP is forecast to decrease by 0.3 per cent. Household income is expected to increase – it is an increase, Mr. Speaker – by 0.2 per cent. By the way, as household income increases by 0.2 per cent, consumer prices are expected to increase by 1 per cent, and we are going to add a 2 per cent HST increase on that. The modest increase in household income will certainly be offset by the government's increase in the HST.

Employment is expected to average 234,000, down from 2014, so employment is down. Retail sales are expected a modest decrease of 0.3 per cent to \$8.9 billion. Mr. Speaker, my guess would be, and I am not an economist by any stretch of the imagination, but once January 1, 2016 comes and we bring in a 2 per cent increase in the HST, if government predicts a modest decline this year in retail sales, look out in 2016.

Oil production is supposed to decrease; the Province's population, decrease; mineral exploration is also going to decrease; fish landings in our Province are going to remain stable. Well, Mr. Speaker, stable is good; we

can handle stable. This government also has to prepare for the return of groundfish.

I was in Grates Cove; it will be two weeks this Saturday, I met with the Harbour Authority. One of the things that the seventeen crews that fish Grates Cove were talking about is they have a quota, I think it is 3,000 pounds currently. Seventeen crews in Grates Cove fishing 3,000 pounds of cod. We have to ensure with the federal government that the basic infrastructure is in place and our marketing is in place so that when cod does return, we are ready for that change.

Mr. Speaker, another expectation of the government's Budget this year is a 9.6 per cent decline in housing starts. It is quite interesting that is the government's document. Yesterday in a couple of news articles the Minister of Finance – I have an article here from *The Telegram*. The minister acknowledges the Province is in a recession. In another article the Minister of Finance says: economic indicators are strong, despite recession.

Economic indicators, Mr. Speaker – I just spoke of some of the economic indicators. GDP in 2015 is down, final domestic product is down, household incomes are down, disposable income is down, retail sales are down, and the Consumer Price Index is up.

AN HON. MEMBER: That is not a good thing (inaudible) inflation.

MR. CROCKER: Yes, that is inflation. Yes, you are correct.

Housing starts, as I just mentioned a moment ago, are down 9.6 per cent. Unemployment is up, the labour force is down, and the population is down. Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the Finance Minister sees the positive indicators, despite we are in a recession.

Bear with me, Mr. Speaker, there is so much in these documents. I will put that one down and go to another one.

MR. S. COLLINS: Do you want me to sing a song in the book?

MR. CROCKER: No, I say to the Member for Terra Nova, there is no need for him to sing this afternoon.

I want to refer back to another glossy document. This glossy document is called *Securing the Future: A 10-Year Sustainability Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*. This stability plan – and we know this government has lots of plans, lots of paper, and lots of glossy documents. This one is dated March 26, 2013, so a little over two years ago, at which time the government was going to eliminate the deficit – this year actually government is going to get rid of the deficit; 2015-2016, the deficit was gone.

Government at that time, Mr. Speaker, was committing to long-term planning. I find there is one interesting section in the sustainability plan; it is on page 14. The Auditor General warns back in his 2012 report, and I quote, “World oil prices are highly volatile and production levels related to non-renewable resources can vary significantly. Therefore, changes in these factors can result in significant changes in revenue from year to year”

AN HON. MEMBER: That was only three years ago.

MR. CROCKER: Yes, three years ago the Auditor General said – this is one of the government's glossy documents – world oil prices are highly volatile. We knew that three years ago, but oh no, we did not plan. We never, ever considered it. There was never a rainy day fund.

I remember one of the things in the early 1990s when the Chrétien government came to power in Ottawa – and I guess I am a little biased. One of the things, probably the best Finance Minister in Canadian history, Paul Martin, always did was he had a contingency fund. He built a contingency fund into his Budget because Canada is a natural-resources-based economy. One thing we know about economies based on natural resources is it is volatile. We look today at Lab West and we see the changes in iron ore prices and the havoc that is causing in Lab West, but to offset that we have to plan.

Now, after twelve years of government, and their new eight pillars – pillar number eight is a

legacy fund or a heritage fund or some kind of fund. So seventeen years after taking power – good planning – seventeen years after taking power this government is going to plan for a rainy day, Mr. Speaker. Seventeen years after taking government.

In 2021, I say to the member, I think this government is going to be ready to plan for the future.

MS C. BENNETT: (Inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: Yes, good point, I say to the Member for Virginia Waters. By that time, we will have \$14 billion in debt.

I just have to refer back to something very early here in the two-year-old plan. Here we go: In 2004, when our Administration took office, we inherited the structural deficit of almost \$12 million. Now, we will dispute that number. I think it was more like \$9.3 –

AN HON. MEMBER: Billion.

MR. CROCKER: Billion, sorry. That is a B. Yes, B for Bob.

In the last ten years this government has taken us 180, plus a few billion. In 2004, we had a \$9.3 billion structural deficit, and in 2019 this government is telling us that we are going to have a \$14.9 billion structural deficit. Mr. Speaker, astonishing. It is almost double in seventeen years.

I see my time is running out, Mr. Speaker. I am only about 25 per cent through my glossy documents but I will get another couple of opportunities in the coming days and hopefully at that time I will get through the rest of my glossy documents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JACKMAN: That is it, Mr. Speaker, that is one of them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to get up and speak to the Budget. I am going to take a little bit of a –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: I am going to take a little bit of a different approach, I think, Mr. Speaker, but before I get into that I would like to just speak to some of the points that the member just talked about.

Mr. Speaker, the volatility of oil has always been there, there is no doubt about that. I think if a lot of people had tried to predict where it was going to be about a year and a half ago, even though people will talk to volatility, I do not think anyone would have predicted it would have gone to where it is at this particular point.

As much as the member might want to paint the terrible stories and whatnot, I just want to point out a couple of things to him. That since they have been recording unemployment statistics nationally, 2013 and 2014 were the lowest numbers of unemployment that Newfoundland and Labrador ever had. The lowest it has ever had.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, there is another statement I would ask the member to go and take a look at. There was a May 8 article that came out and quoted Stats Canada. In terms of Atlantic Canada, it says that Newfoundland and Labrador was the only province that saw job gains. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, some 2,200. I want to speak to the people of the Province through this means, those who are listening, please do not take the message that everything is doom and gloom.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier said it. I heard him in an interview one day and he said, this is a bump in the road and we are asking the people of the Province to work with us. Things are going to be okay. We will get through this and

continue the good work that is going on in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we in this House are called upon from time to time to get up and speak for ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: – and oftentimes, Mr. Speaker, we are called upon by someone who leading a piece of legislation and say, would you mind getting up to speak? Oftentimes we get up on very short notice and speak in this House, Mr. Speaker.

In speaking to the Budget, I thought what I would do is I would take it from two perspectives: one is the challenges that we were faced with and how we dealt with them. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The second point, this is the Budget we are going to be taking to the people of the Province in an election, and these are the people who will judge. I am going to ask something of the people who speak here now shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I have sat around a Cabinet table for eight years, a little over eight years, and I have been through a budget process eight years in a row. I am going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, the discussions we had around this Budget were more intense. It was longer than either of the previous years that I have sat around that table.

We looked at decisions, we brought forward suggestions, proposals were brought forward, we assessed them, we reassessed them, we put them in, we took them out, reconsidered, and, Mr. Speaker, like I said, there was more discussion went into this Budget from what I have sat around the table in the past eight years than I have ever seen before.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to outline the approach. I will say to the members who are heckling a little bit, I am not here, standing up and speaking to this Budget in a joking way. I am serious when I speak about it, and speak about the direction that we had to take.

MR. J. BENNETT: You should be wearing black.

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Barbe suggests we should be wearing black. I hope the people of the Province are paying attention to those kinds of commentaries because that will tell you the difference between that crowd and our crowd.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am thinking that he is suggesting we wear black because it is doom and gloom. We on this side certainly do not believe that.

Mr. Speaker, I will say to you that when we went into the Budget process, just through my Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, we could have cut funding to community organizations and sports groups. We could have cut funding in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. We could have cut funding for the supports that we offer to seniors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There are many conversations going on both sides of the House and it is very difficult to listen to the hon. minister and hear the hon. minister. If we could, on both sides, can we carry our conversations on both sides?

Thank you.

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

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, we could have cut dollars from the Disability Policy Office. In AES, we could have cut Income Support. We could have cut JCPs. We could have cut the apprenticeship programs. We could have cut training programs. We could have laid off people, but we did not do that.

We said that we needed to be measured. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we came up with the attrition plan. The purpose of the attrition plan is that as people retire we replace a certain number. If we had gone with layoffs, who would have been the

first ones who would have been laid off? The young people who are entering our workforce, so we did not want to go there.

Mr. Speaker, I caution people because there has been commentary made in this House. The Member for Virginia Waters has said it on occasions. It has been in the newspaper. She has tipped her hand. She has indicated there will be cuts. The one thing that she has not figured out yet is where.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters on a point of order.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I correct the minister on the opposite side and say that what I have clearly said repeatedly is respecting the public sector, but more importantly, cutting the waste out that this government continues to waste today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I will tell you –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, when you see a response like that, and the onslaught of applause, that tells you are hitting a nerve. You are hitting a nerve.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: I will credit people – they are the ones who will see through it, Mr. Speaker.

The second thing we had to do – we had to be measured because you did not want to go in and

just throw everything into disarray. Mr. Speaker, the second thing we had to do is we had to be balanced. We knew there were things that we had to do, but we had to be balanced. There were things that could be cancelled. I will say to the people in my district, we have approved dollars for a protective custody unit – a dementia unit – in my district.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to the people, just be a little bit wary, just be a little bit wary as to if you are hearing comments from the Member for Virginia Waters talking about she is going in, she does not know where, but she is going to – just be wary of some of the things that might disappear.

So we had to be balanced.

AN HON. MEMBER: Fear mongering.

MR. JACKMAN: Someone across the floor is saying fear mongering. No, I give the people of the Province more credit than that. They will decide.

We had to find balance. We knew there were projects that had to be done. It is quite obvious and evident to people around the areas in Gander, I will say, and on the Avalon, out around Bay Roberts, schools have to be built. Students have to have places whereby they have to sit. There are places, Mr. Speaker, where students have to sit. We have the demand of increased population growth; therefore, we have no choice. There are other projects in schools that need to happen. There are renovations that have to be carried out.

So, Mr. Speaker, we were measured in our approach and we were balanced in our approach. There were some projects that we have heard in the media that people are disappointed that they did not get the go-ahead. Well, I would ask those people to recognize that we do face this bump in the road and that we would ask that they work with us, because we still are committed.

I heard an interview around the Waterford Hospital – and I will tell you, in that intense debate that was one that we did have a lengthy discussion on. As the minister has indicated, as we have said, we are still committed to that

project, and we would ask people just to bear with us.

So, Mr. Speaker, we had choices to make. We wanted to be measured and we wanted to be balanced. So where are we now? That leads me into my second part. We are now – we know it, that sometime this fall we are going to be heading into an election. What we are going to have to do is we are going to have to trust on the people to decide. Everyone knows that ultimately it is the people of the Province who will decide.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard on several occasions, they have talked about misspending and we went and did projects that we did not plan. Well, whether they like it or not – and I do not like going to history too much, but there were many projects that we had to get into.

I remember early when we came into power, if there was one thing that we heard over and over again, was about mould in schools. I come from that in my previous career, Mr. Speaker. We heard about those projects that required mould remediation. We had no choice. We had to go down that road. That is where we did go. The number of schools that we built, we have gone down that road.

Let me tell you, I will just reflect a little bit on the Burin Peninsula. The CT scan was a piece of equipment that was required. One of the biggest issues that residents faced at that particular point, and I really felt for the individuals who needed that service, that for three days a week the people had to leave the Burin Peninsula and they drove either an hour-and-a-half to Clarendville, if they could get in, or more of a requirement is they drove three times a week into St. John's, received dialysis, and then had to drive back.

Mr. Speaker, when I leave government, if there is one thing that I can say that I am more than proud of being a part of was putting that dialysis unit down there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: That means that an individual can now get in their vehicle and the longest they probably have to go it about thirty

to forty minutes. I know people who are in that and I know how draining it is on them to receive dialysis. I can only imagine that three-hour drive one way, six hours on the road, three times a week to receive dialysis.

So, Mr. Speaker, put all the political rhetoric aside, I do not care what anybody says, we did not have to do that and we could have continued the old practice, but that was a worthy, worthy investment.

Mr. Speaker, another one –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: The Premier, the Minister of Health, a number of us, went out in Paradise and went to the announcement around the private-public non-profit partnerships. That will be the creation of 360 beds. Now there has been some question as to where –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask hon. members if they want to have a sidebar conversation, they take it outside of the Chamber.

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

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I never did think I would spark that much reaction, but it is getting there.

About the creation of 360 long-term care beds – do you know the biggest question I received on that? When will they be available? The minister has gotten into the recognition that we can do these more cost efficient, we can do them faster and with our aging demographics, it is where we need to go.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say another one. The Member for Virginia Waters got up the other day and spoke to what we have done, how we have neglected Corner Brook pulp and paper. Mr. Speaker, we offered \$110 million support, and I will tell you the other thing that I am not

that fond of hearing. She made this comment; the Office of Public Engagement, she referred to it as the department of clickers. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Office of Public Engagement has gone around the Province and has held multiple sessions to seek input from people.

I have been to a number of those sessions and you know the difference in those. Oftentimes when they hold these sessions, you will get three or four people who parade to a microphone and they are the ones who put their views forward and oftentimes that is what dominates the conversation. The Office of Public Engagement, through the use of new technology, as she refers to it as clickers, have engaged more people. I have heard from people who have attended these sessions and they have said they very much appreciate the opportunity to provide their input.

Mr. Speaker, I have also heard some commentary about Nalcor, whether we should be investing in Nalcor. Somebody said something to me a couple of years ago that really resonated. They said they want Nalcor to become Norway's Statoil.

Anybody who follows Statoil – Statoil is a renowned recognized entity that goes all over the world to make investments in the oil industry and the returns go back to Norway. Mr. Speaker, that is what we need of Nalcor.

That is why I can guarantee you, anybody who asks me publicly where I stand on our financial support for Nalcor; I have absolutely no qualms about saying I totally support our investment 100 per cent. I predict, Mr. Speaker, if we allow Nalcor to continue their work, they will become the Statoil for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: The returns they bring to our Province will be the rewards, not for my generation, Mr. Speaker, but it will be for my grandchildren. That will ensure we have the revenue coming into our Province and that they will reap returns for it.

Mr. Speaker, twenty minutes goes by rather quickly, and I certainly could enlighten – I have to say, I am thrown off sometimes with some of the commentary by the Member for Virginia

Waters. She mentioned another one, the Department of Transportation and Works, and almost insinuated there was a staff member out there who was abusing the use of a government vehicle. She mentioned what the AG had done. The difference was the AG was asking that it be looked into. She was accusatory. She had made up her mind, and that is a dangerous, dangerous thing.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to conclude by this. I am going to say to the people who are listening: judge us on what we have done. There will be things that people will say yes, we should or should not have, but tonight I am going to ask the people judge us on what we have done. Look at what we have outlined in the Budget. Look at what the minister has outlined for the next five years, and judge us on the way forward.

I would ask people as we get closer and closer to the election, just not listen to rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. The easiest job in the House of Assembly is to be Opposition, because all you have to do is criticize; you do not have to govern. We have governed, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to doing my easy job. I agree with the minister, actually it is pretty easy to criticize a lot of things. Anyway, I will continue.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity now for the first time to speak to the Budget. Of course we are debating the sub amendment, so everyone will get at least two more opportunities to speak on the Budget. I am looking forward to having a few words today.

Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the Member for Kilbride, a fine member, I must say. I have a lot of respect for him; a nice guy, a good

constituency guy. He was talking about the unemployment rates. He was talking about the history. It was a nice history lesson on where our unemployment rates have gone and so on.

I just heard the minister talk about a couple of years back we were at a very good level in terms of employment and so on, but we are really not here to talk about what our past levels were and so on. We are really here to talk about where we are today and where are we heading. That is really what we need to talk about. That is what people are more concerned about, is where we find ourselves today.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, when you look at the Budget numbers, and we are not making up these numbers. These numbers are coming straight from government's own documentation. When we look at them, Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious to the people that we have a real financial crisis on our hands, and there is no doubt about it.

The minister said there is a small bump in the road. I do not know how small the bump in the road is. He might refer to it as a small bump, and some people might sort of liken it to the bump we seen in Rose Blanche. There was a small bump in that road; the pothole was so big that there were actually people canoeing in it. I guess it depends on who you ask exactly how small or how large that bump happens to be, but no doubt, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we have heard government members talk about the fact that much of this is attributable to the price of oil. I agree. I totally agree with the members opposite, that oil is playing a big factor in all of this, the price of oil and certainly production.

I would agree that they perhaps could not predict, although if you listen to statements that have been made by experts in the past – and the Auditor General warned of this. They said that oil is volatile, as we all know, and it could certainly go down. I do not think the government, I do not think anybody here necessarily believed it was going to decline at the rate that it did, as fast as it did. It did happen nonetheless.

Government certainly would be aware of the production numbers. Obviously that is something they get through the C-NLOPB and so on. They would have known in advance basically, how much production there will be in any given year. They would have known that in terms of Hibernia and so on we have already peaked and now we are sort of on the downturn.

When we look at the employment numbers that a couple of the members opposite referenced, they looked at the numbers for employment and they were saying how they had been so high. Well that was attributable, naturally, to oil. It was attributed to the fact that production was high, that prices were high, and we had these megaprojects that were on the go out in Bull Arm, Marystown, and so on. Of course now we have Muskrat Falls. Whether people agree with Muskrat Falls or they do not, one of the short-term benefits is the fact that there would be employment in terms of construction.

We have seen peaks in employment, but now we are seeing the other side of it where things are now on the decline. We hope on this side and we are optimistic – I heard it said that you are preaching doom and gloom and fear mongering. That is not true at all, but we are trying to live in reality and to talk about the reality of the situation.

We are all hopeful that at some point in time oil prices will rebound. Whether they will ever get back to \$105 a barrel, who knows? I do not think they will, but who knows? I think they will rebound to some degree.

There is no doubt that when we look at opportunities with Hebron, Bay du Nord, and all those projects that will be happening over the next number of years, that production eventually will go up again and we will reap the benefits of that. I do believe that in the future, as government has said – I think we all agree, we are all very hopeful – that production will go up, that prices will stabilize, and we will be in a better position.

The question is, I suppose, how did we get to where we are today? While members opposite might like to say that it was totally because of the price of oil, I think we have to ask ourselves what planning was done. Were there any

warnings? Was there any planning? Should there have been any planning for oil prices to drop? When we look at even last year's Budget, last year's Budget was predicting over \$600 million – I am not sure the exact number, but it was somewhere in the area of a \$600 million deficit predicted. That is when oil prices were high.

So even when the prices were at \$100 or \$105 a barrel and so on, even at those prices, they were already predicting the fact that we would have a \$600 million deficit. The fact that part way through that fiscal year that price has plummeted, that has put us in a much worse position where now we are over a billion dollars – we have over a billion dollar deficit and we know that now we have had to borrow \$2 billion in this Budget, and we know we are going to have to borrow more for the next few years because prices have dropped substantially. Even before all that happened, at the time when prices were high, government was still predicting a \$600 million deficit.

So, it just ties into the fact that even if this did not happen, we still were not managing our affairs the way we should have been anyway. I think that is a point that members opposite would want people not to realize, just to sort of throw it out there: Oh, it is all because of oil prices. It is not all because of oil prices. It is worse because of oil prices, but even if that did not happen, we still would have found ourselves – or I should not say we would have found ourselves, we would have put ourselves in this position. That is really what happened.

When we talk about now trying to find efficiencies – and we can all debate, some would say, well what you cut or what would you do, and so on. We can all talk about that. I think the point is that perhaps we should not have been having to talk about this today, had we had left a buffer. Now, whether that buffer – I am not suggesting it would be necessarily a rainy day fund or a heritage fund; you can call it what you like.

To me, it would make more sense to had paid more down on debt so when times were bad then if we needed to borrow, then it would have had less of an effect. At least by putting it on debt we would be saving money on interest and so

on, as opposed to a heritage fund. I mean, they had a heritage fund in Alberta, but that was after they were debt free and they were writing cheques to everybody in Alberta, then they were talking about a heritage fund.

I think it goes to the point of living beyond our means, because basically what has happened is that for every dollar that a barrel of oil went up, that equated to more spending. Now, I want to make this point clear as well, because members opposite have talked about spending and said: What school wouldn't you have built? What hospital wouldn't you have built and so on?

We all agreed; it was capital spending that was required. There is more capital spending that is going to be required. We all know that, but it is not about the capital spending. It is about the ongoing operational expenses that continue to drive the deficit and the debt now, year over year over year. It is the ongoing operations.

There are all kinds of examples we can point to of things that maybe you could argue was wasteful or not good management and so on. Just a few of them that come to mind – and this is not an exhaustive list by any stretch, but we look at the fact that a number of years ago when Premier Williams, at the time, had his big fight with Prime Minister Harper and we started losing federal services, which I believe was punishment, to be honest with you. Whether that is true or not, but there is philosophy out there – there are people out there who think we have been punished. I tend to agree to some degree that we have been punished for that, for ABC and so on.

It was federal responsibilities that were removed by the federal government, but what we decided to do was we will take them on. It was a case of well, the heck with you. If you are going to remove them, we will do them.

We can to look at things like fishery science for example. I am not against fishery science. I believe it is very necessary and I support fishery science. I absolutely do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: It is critical to rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but the point of the matter is,

though, is that was a federal responsibility that got downloaded on us and we accepted it. We should not be accepting it. We should be demanding the federal government take on its responsibility and that is money we would not have to spend on federal programs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I believe river wardens were another one, if I am not mistaken, at the time. We had some provincial and some federal, I believe, and the feds cut theirs out and we said we would pick up the slack; we will do it. The heck with you; we will do it.

There were other things as well that the federal government were and are responsible for and we just accepted that download. We said the heck with you, if you will not do it, we will do it ourselves; but these are not one-time things, like capital. These are now ongoing. So it is like every year we have these salaries and expenses associated to that that certainly that adds on to the debt and our deficit and things we should not be doing.

We have already talked about the \$445,000 that Nalcor spent on this we are ready for winter campaign.

AN HON. MEMBER: How ready were they?

MR. LANE: Obviously they were not ready because we still had issues, but we still spent \$445,000. Now, whether it is arm's-length or not, we keep getting reminded by the minister all the time that Nalcor is us. It is our company. We own it. We are the only shareholders. Certainly, we have been writing a lot of cheques to Nalcor year over year – a huge cheque in this Budget to Nalcor, yet they can spend that money on some glossy ads and advertising saying we are ready.

We have heard about schools. We have had a number of schools in the Province that have been shut down because they were building new schools or whatever the case might be and they shut down the old ones. For three and four years later we are still paying for heat and light and so on, on these buildings. There was one – I think it was the one in St. Anthony, or near St. Anthony – that is actually scheduled for

demolition. It is in St. Anthony. It actually says on the chart when you look at the status: demolition; but we are paying heat and light and have been paying it for the last two or three years or whatever – I think it is like \$1 million for all the schools – heat and light on buildings that are not used and are scheduled for demolition.

We look at the amalgamation of the school boards because we are talking about doing the same now with the health authorities, taking the administrative functions and putting them under one authority and so on. At the time, when we did this with the school boards, we were all told that this was going to save money. We have not been able to get the answer but my understanding it is actually costing us more money now than it did under the old system. We have actually spent more money than saved money.

Of course, we have taken all of these environmental liabilities. We have talked about Come by Chance, Abitibi, and all those things. We are not sure what the number is because we just took them on. We did not even bother to do the assessments. Well, we will take it on and then we do the assessment after.

Of course, we have seen all of the Auditor General recommendations. There was a number of them came out that will save us thousands of dollars, hundreds of thousands, millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, that has not happened.

The worse thing about this, Mr. Speaker, you get up on a little bit of a tantrum here – I have five minutes left, but I am glad I have a lot more time to speak to be able to go again, but what I really wanted to start off talking about, and I –

AN HON. MEMBER: Fifteen minutes ago.

MR. LANE: Fifteen minutes ago my colleague said.

What I wanted to start talking about was I think could be considered a root cause to all of these issues. All of these issues that I listed here, what would a root cause be? I think certainly one of the root causes – because it is all management issues. It is all about management having

control over your departments, control over your expenditures and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I would have to question, how do you do that when you have a revolving door of ministers? I am not tying this just to this government. I think if you were to go back in history, in past Administrations, we have seen it. We have seen it in all Administrations. Although this one here, I have to say, some of the numbers here have been absolutely brutal, beyond the norm.

If a person goes into a department as a minister, I would suggest there is a pretty sharp learning curve associated with that. Of course it depends on the department. Some departments are larger than others. Some have more responsibilities. To be honest with you, I do not know since the latest shake up. I look at the Minister of – I think he is Justice and Business and –

AN HON. MEMBER: Tourism.

MR. LANE: – Tourism and –

AN HON. MEMBER: Public Safety.

MR. LANE: – Public Safety. I am not sure what else.

AN HON. MEMBER: Rural Development.

MR. LANE: Rural Development. He is doing it all. He is like a one-man show. I do not mean that in a disrespectful way, I mean that in a sincere way. I honestly do not know how the man is managing to juggle it all. I do not know how he is doing it. I really do not. Good for him that he is able to keep all those balls up in the air and do the best that he can, but I do not know how he does it. There is no doubt, that is a classic example of how it has gotten even worse.

It takes time to get into a department, to learn what is going on and really be able to get a handle on things. I would say it probably takes a year or probably two years really, to totally get immersed and understand how things work. By the time somebody goes in there, they are yanked out again. So they do not have time to manage anything.

Is it any wonder that a lot of these issues take place when there is no steady hand at the helm? As soon as somebody goes in there, before you know it they are yanked out again, or the department has changed, or the name has changed, or the focus has changed, the offices are changed, everything is changed. This was made even worse over the last year or so because of the leadership issue in the governing party.

They had all these interim Premiers and want-to-be Premiers and people who wanted to be, who were ejected and someone else who quit, and then all this stuff that happened. Between that and all of the departments changing and ministers changing left, right and centre, I think it is fair to say things have been on autopilot. I have heard people say I think it has been on autopilot. I tend to agree that it has been on autopilot.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are many specifics that I could get into and, unfortunately, I am running out of time. I am going to look at, for example, Service Newfoundland and Labrador, Service NL, because that is the department I shadow, critic, whatever you want to call it. It was formerly called Government Services. Since 2003, we have had nine ministers. Since 2011, we have had six – six since 2011. Of course, the latest change that we have seen, we actually have the Minister of CYFS – Workers' Comp used to be part of Service NL and that just got removed. Now Workers' Comp has gone with the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

I am not sure if I see that fit, and I am not sure how comfortable I would feel if I was an injured worker. It has nothing to do with the minister, nothing to do with the individual, he is a good fellow. I am not knocking that at all. It is nothing about him as an individual, but to have the Minister of CYFS responsible for Worker's Comp, I am not sure what kind of priority somebody who is an injured worker gets in that scenario. It is very concerning. When we hear about all the issues going on with injured workers, that is a concern.

Of course, we also gave the Minister of Finance the OCIO, Office of the Chief Information Officer, which was part of Service NL. Then the

Government Purchasing Agency, which is part of Service NL, has gone to the Minister of Education. So there is no doubt there is a real mess, and it is no wonder that things are in the state they are. I am going to have a lot of examples to give for all the departments when I speak the next time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to be able to stand here today and have an opportunity to speak on the Budget. A Budget that is named Balancing Choices for a Promising Future.

I am going to start my introduction by talking a little about my district and then I will get into the Budget. I certainly will not get everything that I have to say in in twenty minutes, but anyone who talks about how an economy can change overnight and change quickly, my district is evidence of that.

This time sixteen months ago Labrador West was known as little Fort McMurray. We were booming. The economy in Labrador West was booming. The morale was booming. Every secondary industry in Labrador West had a sign in their window: help wanted. Over the last four years we have had over 400 foreign workers come into a community with only 9,000 people in it. That is indicative of how strong and how vibrant the economy actually was.

Of course, in January 2014, we started to see a shift. That was when Wabush Mines hinted they were going to be making some changes in their workforce. They were not saying exactly what they were doing. In February, 2014, they made a drastic announcement, just five weeks later, that they were not going to be considering a shutdown. They were not going to be considering a layoff. They were actually closing their doors.

I remember sitting in the minister's boardroom on a Tuesday afternoon. We were supposed to have a meeting that day with Cleveland-Cliffs, the owners of Wabush Mines. Rather than them show up at the meeting, we went into a conference call and we were advised then, on a Tuesday afternoon, that Thursday morning they will be making an announcement to 450 employees that they were closing their door. That is how quickly it can change.

In a matter of twenty-four hours, they were going from employing over 450 people to employing – at that time they went from 450, and they went into what we call a warm idle. When they went into a warm idle, they went from 450 employees down to, I think it was fifty-six that they employed. You are not talking employees who were making \$35,000 or \$40,000 a year. You are talking the average income per person of between \$90,000 and \$120,000 a year. That was the average income.

When you think about it, a tradesperson who, many of them had a Grade 12 education, went and did a trade and went there as apprentices, a lot of them working there for over twenty-five years, and they were doing very well for themselves. They were set into a certain lifestyle, used to having a certain income coming in on a biweekly basis. All of a sudden, all of that is ripped out from underneath you.

Like I said, that happened within a period of twenty-four hours. I remember sitting in the Wabush Hotel in a meeting and I had seventeen people who were employees of Wabush Mines. The junior person in those seventeen people had twenty-seven-and-a-half years of employment with the company. They were the ones who were affected the most, because they were the ones, their pension really got hurt on that. So, they were wondering what you can do to help them.

Then in the next twelve months, while we are dealing with the Wabush Mines warm idle, you start hearing rumblings of Alderon, and you hear rumblings of Bloom Lake, and you hear rumblings of the IOC expansion. Now, you have to bear in mind, Rio Tinto had just spent \$3.6 billion to prepare for an expansion – \$3.6 billion – and now all of a sudden that is on hold.

Alderon – which many of the people in the community had made personal investments in, hoping to have a return on it – all of a sudden Alderon is on hold. Then Alderon is just delayed for twelve months, and then Alderon is cancelled. Now Alderon has maybe three employees until the market picks up again. Bloom Lake, a company that Cleveland-Cliffs paid \$5.9 billion for less than five years ago – \$5.9 billion Cleveland-Cliffs made an investment in – and all of a sudden again, overnight, Bloom Lake is closed.

A lot of people say: Well, do you know what? What effect does Bloom Lake have on Labrador West that is in Quebec? It is – it is sixty kilometres on the other side of the border, on the Quebec side of the border, but all of the secondary industry for Bloom Lake employed people from Labrador West. I have to say, not just from Labrador West, because I know I have heard the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, I have heard the Member for Happy Valley-Goose Bay, I have heard the Member for Torngat Mountains stand in this House of Assembly and comment on how people in their district were working in Labrador West and were reaping the benefits of employment in Labrador West. All of a sudden all of that is gone. So here now is the secondary industry that is affected – and again, all with no warning.

In the last couple of months, IOC has been trickling, how are we going to cut down on our expenses, and they tried through attrition and they tried asked for wage freezes. Just a short while ago, about a month ago, they announced 150 more people who are going to be laid off in May. Some of those people in that 150-person layoff – and I have to comment on the janitors.

It hits home when your next door neighbour who has twenty-six years of service with a company, who has two teenage children she is raising on her own, who has an elderly mother who she supports, went to work one day – after working six days straight, six twelve-hour shifts, went into work and when she came home from work there was an envelope on the kitchen table letting her know that effective in a month's time after twenty-six years of service, your services are no longer required and there is no retribution whatsoever. You have no bumping rights because your job just became declassified. That

is a big pill to swallow. So that is what is happening now in Labrador West and that is how quickly an economy can change.

We are not just seeing that in Labrador West. I had to talk about my district. I am talking all doom and gloom for the last eight minutes, but the people in Labrador West – and there was a minister in my district about two weeks ago. After meetings all day and a public speaking engagement he said there is something different about the atmosphere of the people in Labrador West.

Every time I have a minister – when the Premier was in, the Premier made the same comments. I have had three Premiers in my four-year term so far who have been into my district and spoken. They all make the same comment: The people in Labrador West are different. They have a different outlook.

Do not get me wrong, there are a lot of people in Labrador West right now who are extremely nervous. There are people going through foreclosures. For those of you who are in the virtual Facebook page and social media, if you go on and you look up the Labrador Virtual Flea Market, I tell you if you are looking for a deal, there is no problem to find a deal now in Labrador West. They cannot give their Ski-Doos away. They cannot give their big trucks away. They cannot give their four-wheelers away. Houses that people have \$400,000 and \$500,000 mortgages on, they are starting to see foreclosures on them. There is a glimmer of hope there. People are saying it has to change. They are resilient and they are watching.

When I went home the last couple of weekends people say to me – and of course like any member in this House of Assembly I have no doubt when you go into your district you are not sure; do I go to the mall because people are going to want to talk about this Budget? Do I go to the church? Do I go to the grocery store? I can guarantee you, I do that. I am fortunate in my district – if I spend an afternoon in the local mall there, I can speak to probably 50 per cent of my constituents. I am very lucky like that, and I am glad I am because it gives me that opportunity to mingle with my constituents.

When I go to mass on Sunday, they know where I sit in the church; I sit in the same pew every Sunday. They know where I am at. People know how to get in touch with me, and they talk to me. People are not afraid to come up to me, as I am sure with many other members in this House, your constituents do not mind approaching you and letting you know how they feel.

My constituents, they have some concerns with the Budget but I sit down with them and I explain to them what we are dealing with. Because of the economy the way it is, the state the way it is right now in Labrador West, maybe it is a little easier to understand. Maybe the people in Labrador West are saying we understand what we are going through there. They are accepting some of the hard choices that we had to make.

I had a constituent say to me on Saturday – we were sitting down and we were having a coffee. We chatted for maybe forty, forty-five minutes. That constituent looked at me and he said: I am here now over forty years. I supported you in the last election. He said: I am going to support you in the next election because anybody can govern when times are good. When times are good, anyone can govern because everything is flush. He looked at me and he said: Now times are a little bit different and now we are seeing that this government – this is a constituent that said this to me – does not mind making the difficult choices. You are making choices to make the future better for us, and that is what it is all about. It is making choices that will plan for a better future. That is some of the things that we are doing as a government. These are the choices that we are making.

I look at some of the choices that we made in this Budget. Nobody likes to see fee increases. Nobody likes to see tax increases, and I do not think any government likes to implement that. When you have to make a choice where you either make certain increases and try to harmonize it throughout the whole economy, or you have major layoffs, or you make major cuts in programs, you have to make the choice. I think that this government made the right choices in the economy that we are dealing with right now.

We have made some choices that we feel we can live with. We have made some economic decisions and I feel the people of Newfoundland and Labrador can get through the transition period that we are going through. This is a transition period.

I have seen the economy where it has bottomed out completely. I remember in 1992 on one street alone in Labrador West there were 138 houses that were barred up. I remember the manager of one of the financial institutions there. I was chatting with her one day and she said, Nick, I have a rule that I never close my office doors. As the bank manager her door was always open, she never closed her door. She said, I am afraid to turn my chair around because the keys are being thrown in that fast I am afraid I am going to get pelted with keys – on one street alone 138 houses.

I remember in 1992 there were over 430 homes that were vacant and that economy turned around. Then in 2002 we had another difficult time and we rode through that. Since 2007 in Labrador West there have been over 600 new homes built. That is unprecedented. That is in a community of only 9,000 people. These are big homes that are being built. There are three new subdivisions. You cannot buy a piece of land right now in Labrador West, but as I said right now the economy is hurting.

Another thing that I think we need to remember – I will talk about the iron ore. I had the privilege of sitting in on a round table at the College of the North Atlantic in my district last Friday. We have nine Ph.D. students from Memorial University who are here from all over the world. They were there from Switzerland. They were there from Finland, from Austria, and from Spain. These Ph.D. students wanted to talk about Arctic living, today's economy, and what effect it is having on Arctic living.

They were amazed. They made the comments of the people in Labrador West. They came up to me after and they said it is amazing the amount of information the people in Labrador West can share with you. We know that we are going to have vacant homes in the next while. One of the comments I heard by quite a few of the presenters at this round table was that iron ore right now – twenty years ago the iron ore in

Labrador West was sold to a captive industry. It was being sold to the steel mills in North America. Then Rio Tinto purchased the Iron Ore Company of Canada, and Cleveland-Cliffs purchased Wabush Mines. All of a sudden the mines in Labrador West were no longer selling to a North American steel market. They became part of the global economy.

That is what we are being affected by right now. We are affected by that global economy because China and India are dictating now where the economy is. You have three large companies that own 70 per cent of the ore market in the world so they are dictating what the price is in ore. Those three companies have big, deep pockets. They can afford to have the ore prices drop to what we are seeing now. Ore prices have gone from \$180 a ton; we have seen it as low as \$44.70 a ton this year. Just a couple of months ago ore was trading at \$44.70 a ton.

Those big companies are not feeling that pinch. It is the smaller junior companies. It is the companies that were getting into the mining industry. The Alderons of the world, the Labrador Iron Mines, these are the mines that are being squeezed out. China is seeing the same thing over there. China just dropped their corporate tax rate by 50 per cent to try and alleviate some of that from happening.

So we know the market is going to come back. We know that Labrador West is going to be around for a long time yet, but for right now the people have to deal with it. That is what we are dealing with. In all of Newfoundland and Labrador, all of Canada, all of North America, right now, the global economy is hurting right now. It is not just in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is going to be very interesting to see in Alberta. We all know with the oil as volatile as it is right now what the economy is like in Alberta. It is going to be very interesting to see in six months what is going to happen and what is going to transition in Alberta. I think we are all keeping a real close eye on how the new government there is going to deal with that. After a government of forty-two years and probably the most prosperous province in our country, and all of a sudden they have made a drastic change in an economic downturn.

For me, when I talk to my constituents, the message that I get out to my constituents is you bear with us. We are steering the ship and we are going to continue to do that. What I am hearing from my constituents is if you can keep it at a steady pace then we will get through it. That is what this Budget is all about.

This Budget is all about making changes now. We have talked about changes in our health care. We have talked about changes in our education. We have talked about changes in our infrastructure plans. We have talked about changes in our transportation plans. One thing that we have to be given credit for is that this government has not come to a standstill. We have not come and said we are stopping everything.

We did not say we were going to stop education. We are still moving forward with our education plans, but we are going to tighten things up. We are going to make it more economically safe. We are going to make it more efficient and someday the oil prices are going to come back up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: We can now get ready for when the prices come up. Then one of the eight pillars is we will build our legacy fund.

I think the most important message – and again I can talk for another twenty minutes no problem. What is important is that we have that plan out there and we have our vision. We have our plan and we have tabled our plan.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member his time has expired.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am very happy to stand and have this opportunity to speak to the Budget. It is very interesting to hear the Member for Labrador West talk about how we will have our ship ready. All I can think of, Mr. Speaker, is that after five years of decline in GDP, job losses, a shrinking economy, the Minister of Finance has said, yes Sir, we are in a recession. What they have done is that we do not have a broad-based economy.

They got rid of the RED Boards. Anything that would make sense, aside from their addiction to great big projects, they have gotten rid of.

AN HON. MEMBER: Obliterated.

MS ROGERS: That too. They have gotten rid of.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has said that he believes everything will be turned around within five years, and then we will start to be able to save for a rainy day. The Member for Labrador West said that we will have our ship in order. I am proposing that by that time they are going to need an ark. That is the ship they are going to need. They are going to need an ark in order to be able to survive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: Because we can be darn sure there is going to be a lot of rain. There are going to be rainy days unless things are turned around, unless we see economic diversification.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues, since the Budget has been released, have stood up and talked about the big picture. They are talking about macroeconomics, and I think that is important. We need to look at economic diversification. We need to look at the price of oil and what is going to happen with the price of oil. We need to look at Nalcor. We need to look at Muskrat Falls. Is Muskrat Falls going to be bountiful for us or are we going to have to get into that ark? Who knows, Mr. Speaker?

MR. KING: (Inaudible).

MS ROGERS: I am getting to that. The Minister of Justice, I am going to get to that because I do not want to spend –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of what I would like to look at, Mr. Speaker, I would like to look at some of the benefits that we have seen, and rather than for me – because many people have talked about the macroeconomics. I would like to look a little more closely at what is happening in people's lives and how this Budget affects the lives of people, because people on both sides of this House have talked about we need to weather the storm.

If we need to weather a storm, there are certain things one needs to do in order to protect themselves from the storm or to be able to stay afloat. We are not going to get to that ark right away. Hopefully we will be able to not have to get to the point of needing an ark, but let's look at how the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – because the title of this Budget is: *Budget 2015: Balancing Choices for a Promising Future.*

What can we do, on all sides of this House, to ensure a promising future for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? Again, I know about the issues, the macroeconomic issues, the larger economic issues, but let's talk about people in our districts, people in our communities, and people in their homes and how they are going weather this storm. That is what I would like to talk a little bit about, Mr. Speaker. Because unless our people are buoyed and able to weather the storm, whatever that storm might be, because it is still not entirely clear.

It was only yesterday that the Minister of Finance finally said yes, we are in a recession. It is so important because if people are not able to weather the storm, what is the point? We are not going to get out of this. We are simply not going to get out of it. We know that any

prosperity that is experienced by this Province is because of the good people of Newfoundland and Labrador who work hard to create that prosperity.

I would like to talk about what I know to be true for some of the good people in my District of St. John's Centre; the good people of St. John's Centre who are hard-working people, who are raising families, who are caring for our sick, who are teaching our children, some people who are very, very economically disadvantaged, but still who have contributed to our society in the ways that they can. That is what I would like to talk a little bit about, Mr. Speaker. Also, the Minister of Finance said that one of the pillars of his Budget was how is this Budget in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? How do we plan for the future?

In the lovely, wonderful District of St. John's Centre, which is smack dab in the heart of St. John's, we have seniors. There are a lot of seniors. I have met a lot of seniors in my district with some very particular needs. After working hard all their lives, after providing for their families, after contributing to our economy, contributing to our society, they have some pretty specific needs. I will talk a little bit about that.

There are a lot of young working families who bought a house, who have children, who are trying to help be part of the population growth and the stability in our Province. There is a fantastic hospital in my district, St. Clare's Hospital. So there are a lot of people who work in St. Clare's Hospital who also live in the district. They are taking care of our sick, some of them working in very difficult situations; the nurses who work very hard, the doctors, people who maintain the hospital, who ensure that the hospital is operating properly and cleaning the hospital.

There are a lot of community groups and agencies in St. John's Centre that are providing incredible services, services around mental health, around services to young people who are out of the school system, services to people who have had run-ins with the law, who are inmates who are now out, who have done their time, a lot of groups that serve people with physical disability.

There are a number of labour groups as well in my district. The FFAW has their main office in my district. So there are a lot of unionized workers. There are a lot of minimum wage workers as well. There are a lot of fast food restaurants, small businesses – small businesses which work really hard and pay minimum wage.

Again, this Budget was *Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*. Mr. Speaker, I do applaud the government for some of the initiatives they did take in this Budget. I am very happy. As you can imagine, I was ecstatic, as well as many women's groups and advocates across the Province were very happy to hear that the domestic violence court is back.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that is not an expense. That is an investment, because we know the recidivism rate for people who went through the Family Violence Intervention Court had dropped. So that means that saves us lots of money. It saves us court costs. The more able we are to help families work through their problems and stay together, if that is their choice, we know that in the long run that saves us money because people are able to be stabilized.

The Minister Responsible for Seniors and Wellness, and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, has talked about doing a pilot project making some portable rent supps for seniors. Now, I do not know if that is new money or if that is simply money that he is going to make – if those are existing rent supps that will become portable. I do not know that, but I have Estimates tonight, so I am looking forward to asking him about that.

What I would like to talk about is, how do we take care of business while we are taking care of business? What I mean by that, Mr. Speaker, how do we ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – and I am thinking specifically the people of St. John's Centre, how are they taken care of? Not that we are taking care of people, but how do we ensure that people have what they need so they can get on and be productive members of our society in whatever way they can while the big macroeconomics, that big picture is being taken care of as well? So that is why I say, how do we take care of

business, in terms of people's lives, while we are taking care of business?

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour and the privilege to be with the all-party committee yesterday in Corner Brook. We met with people who worked in Western Health, we met with people who worked in the area of mental health and addictions, and it was very, very interesting; but not only did we get to meet with managers, we got to meet with people who work on the front line. We also got to meet with people who are consumers of mental health services and families and friends of people with persistent chronic mental health issues, and also groups and organizations, non-profit groups and organizations who do service delivery in this area.

Everywhere we went and everyone we heard from talked about housing. They talked about how expensive housing is, particularly for people on modest incomes, not just people who are on Income Support but people who are even in middle incomes that housing is such a determinant of health but it is also a determinant that can push somebody into poverty. They talked about how difficult it is if you have a mental health issue to live in boarding houses, to live in places that are not safe, that are not appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, we experience that in St. John's Centre. I think the majority of the calls that I get in my office are calls around the need for affordable housing and not only affordable housing, but also calls around the need for supportive housing, for people who need a safe place to live, who need a little bit of help as well in order to be living independently and to be living in this safe place. That people with mental health issues – I think Dr. Ladha who is the Chief Forensic Psychiatrist in the Province, and has been for years, said there is almost no point. There is no way that the people he sees can be well if they do not have a safe place to live.

Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure that this Budget has addressed the incredible growing housing crisis that I see in St. John's Centre, that I know all of us see across the Province. I do not think that this Budget has addressed the issue of working families, young working families who

find housing an incredible barrier. That the cost of housing to them is so high, whether they are renting – if you are family with two children, you are looking at \$1,500 a month – \$1,500 a month – just to rent a decent place to live.

I am not talking about something that is palatial; I am talking about just a decent place to live. It is the same for students, the high rent and how it affects students. When we look at young working families not only do they have that \$1,500 a month cost for rent or a mortgage – a lot of people's mortgages are at least that – then they have on top of that heat and light, insurance, cable, phone, then, Mr. Speaker, to top that off the high cost of child care.

There is nothing in this Budget to provide affordable child care for young working families. How often do we hear people – when we are talking around the dinner table, or when we are out speaking to our constituents – who say I cannot afford to have another child? I would love to have another child, but I cannot afford it.

We know that the average cost for one child in daycare is anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,200 a month. So imagine a mortgage payment or a rent payment of \$1,500 a month. If you have one child, put \$1,000 on top of that. If you have two children, put \$2,000 on top of that. We are up to \$3,500, Mr. Speaker, before food, before heat and light, before cable and phone, and before clothing.

Mr. Speaker, these are foundational pieces. Without affordable housing, without affordable, accessible child care, there is no way that our young working families can survive. We know that household debt has grown exponentially. We know that credit card debt has grown exponentially. How many of us here in the House have heard from young working families where mostly the mom will say I cannot afford to work? The cost of child care makes it prohibitive for me to work. These are young people who are educated, who are trained, who want to work, and be part of our society.

The Budget has done nothing to address those issues. When we look at it, Mr. Speaker, we know that economic diversification in our communities, getting people out to work, is what

builds a strong, reliable, dependent economy. There has been nothing in this Budget to help our people weather the storm when they are talking about – the other side, they are talking about people have to weather the storm, that we have to weather the storm. There are no safety nets. There are no life jackets that this Budget is providing.

There was a promise over four years ago of a home ownership assistance program. We had not seen hide nor hair. There are rumblings that maybe we are going to see it. I am not holding my breath, Mr. Speaker, but I sure as heck hope that we are going to see that because boy, do working families need it in order so that they can work, in order so that they can have children, in order that our population will grow; because we cannot get out of this recession unless we have more people and unless we have more people working and being productive.

Mr. Speaker, we know that housing is so foundational, housing is a social deterrent of health, and I would like to talk a little bit about housing and seniors. I know that every member in this House, every single member in this House gets calls about seniors and their housing crisis. No matter if it is Joe Batt's Arm, whether it is on the Northern Peninsula, whether it is in Labrador or down in Burin, or St. John's Centre, East, North, or South, Salmon Cove, everywhere we know of the housing crisis that is affecting our seniors. Our seniors want to live in their houses. If some of them are over housed, particularly if you are widowed, if you have been married or have been partnered and now you are alone, you are living in a great big house, you cannot afford to keep that great big house going, and you probably need lots of repairs and you need a smaller place to live – again, the rents are so high, and it is often not possible in many communities to sell your great big house and to buy a smaller house, because smaller houses often are more expensive than great big houses that you may have owned for years and years and years.

Seniors want to live in their houses, and that is what we should be aiming at. There is nothing in this Budget to help address that problem. Mayors across the Province in small communities and in larger communities are saying that housing is one of their most crucial

problems that they face in their communities. There is nothing in this Budget to do that, to address that.

Then we also look at seniors, the dental program – I know that many of us get calls from seniors who cannot access a dental program, or that there is a huge waiting list, or if you go to your dentist you have to go for an assessment, then the dentist has to put in forms to see if you are eligible for the dental work that you need. You may wait a few months for that approval to come back. In the meantime, you have dental problems and then you have to go back to the dentist, and maybe you are going to have to drive almost an hour to get to your dentist. It is not working.

Hearing aids – seniors who have to wait a year for an appointment with an audiologist in order to get a hearing aid. We know the isolation that causes when you have a real difficult program.

Then home care; there is nothing in this Budget to address a real comprehensive home care program that helps seniors to stay in their homes because, again, that is what seniors are telling us.

In the far run, if these are choices for a promising future, there is no promise in the future for people who are trying to make a go of it, for people who are trying to cope, trying to have children, seniors who have worked hard all their lives.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

I remind the member her time has expired.

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

I look forward to the opportunity to rise again and to speak to the Budget.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to stand in the House of Assembly and represent the great District of Bellevue, as I have always done. I want to talk about the great District of Bellevue a bit, but I also want to address some of the things that have been said on the other side.

When the Member for St. John's Centre stood up she said: we are going to need an ark. Then after that she said: there are some things in the Budget that I like. First she criticized the Budget and said we are going to need an ark because everything was gone. It is like the song says: she's gone, boys, she's gone. It is terrible.

I remember back first when I got elected in 2007, I think it was, we were talking about the 2 per cent increase on HST and we looked at 15 per cent on HST. Well, it is not very long ago that the 15 per cent was on HST and when the government started getting into the money, we took a percentage off and we rolled it back to 13 per cent. People do not forget that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about my district, the District of Bellevue. I always refer to it as the bridge to the Island and the bridge to the Avalon. My district is very, very –

AN HON. MEMBER: Narrow.

MR. PEACH: It is narrow. You can look at both sides of the bay. In one part of my district you can look at Trinity Bay, and in the other part of my district you can look at Placentia Bay. So it is very narrow.

AN HON. MEMBER: And foggy.

MR. PEACH: Well, you only get that in the Doe Hills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Mr. Speaker, you can laugh all you like and make fun all you like of my district, but I am very proud my district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: I am very proud of the people in my district. I am very proud of the people who put me here in the House of Assembly to represent them and I represent them to the best of my ability, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everybody, my district is the economic driver for this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: My district is the economic driver for this Province. We have the Long Harbour site just across the road there. Now it is going to be in my district the next time around. We have the Bull Arm site, we have Come by Chance, and we have three fish plants in my district.

Mr. Speaker, when you drive out over that road at 5:30 in the afternoon and you see all the vehicles coming towards St. John's and coming towards Harbour Grace and Bay Roberts area, it shows the economic growth that is in that area, in my district that is fueling the whole Avalon Peninsula.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Everything that generates from those companies out there is putting business in St. John's, building up all around the whole Avalon Peninsula.

Our housing out there is really in good shape. We have new homes going up. Just the other day I went into the Home Hardware store there and I saw a lot of lumber being brought in. I said to the guy at the Home Hardware store, you must be expecting a lot of houses to be built this summer. He said, Calvin, you would never believe the requests we have for lumber again this year, where people are going into Long Harbour and building new homes.

I talked to two guys the other day from Alberta who came down here to start work. They worked here for a year-and-a-half and now they are building a new home and they are going to stay there in the area. We are generating revenue. We are bringing people into the

Province. We are creating jobs for young people. Those people are only young, twenty-four years old. I said to him, what brings you here? He said work; work brings me here. That is great to see that happening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance was tasked with putting together a Budget that was focused on the next five years, a Budget that will be *Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*.

I just want to look at Nalcor for a minute. Nalcor's investments in 2017-2018 would, over ten years, be \$3.1 billion but by 2025-2026 it would be a complete payback, Mr. Speaker – a complete payback. In 2041-2042 and beyond, Nalcor's returns, dividends to the Province will be in excess of \$1 billion annually.

This is a vision for the future, a vision for our grandchildren, and for their children. Our Province has had significant growth over the past ten years and we will continue to protect the progress we have made in this five-year plan. We will lay down the groundwork that will allow us to continue to grow.

In 2015, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to invest in the infrastructure. Let's look at some of the areas of infrastructure we have already invested in. We hear from the Opposition on the other side when they say we have wasted money, we have squandered money. We hear that every day. We hear it from St. John's Centre. We hear it from Virginia Waters.

MR. HILLIER: Conception Bay South, what about me?

MR. PEACH: Yes, and even from Conception Bay South.

Let's look at some of the monies that we have invested in. Forestry and agriculture; the forestry industry employs 5,500 people directly and indirectly and is valued at \$250 million annually. Agriculture; the agriculture industry generates direct and indirect employment for approximately \$6,500 people, farm gate revenues upwards towards \$150 million, and the agrifoods processing sector nearly \$500 million a year.

Mr. Speaker, is that squandering money? Tell those 6,500 workers that the money we spent to keep them in jobs over the years was squandering money. It was money that was well spent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Post-secondary education, the Core Science Facility, Memorial University, St. John's, \$9 million; Arts and Science extension, Grenfell campus, Corner Brook, \$27.1 million; Macpherson College residence at MUN in St. John's, \$65 million. Is that money that has been squandered over the years? It certainly does not sound like it, Mr. Speaker.

Fisheries and aquaculture; the seafood sector contributes to the Province annually \$1 billion. I just want to talk a little bit on the fishery. I was down on the wharf the other day in Long Cove and I was talking to some of the fishermen there. Most of the boats are gone now. Most of the boats are in around St. John's and up in Fermeuse and down off Catalina. Some of them are running into some difficulty with the ice in the harbours down there. So some of them could not get down.

We had one skipper last week hauled one trip on the crab and got 75,000 pounds of crab in one trip, in one haul. That was a great fisher, 75,000 pounds in one haul.

The crab is good in some areas and in other areas it is not so good. In 3PS the crab fishery this year is way, way down. The crab fishery –

MR. SLADE: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace on a point of order.

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, not only are they claiming they put the oil there, now they are saying they put the crab there too.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Bellevue.

MR. PEACH: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of funny people in the world. I will say to the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace I have been around as long as he has. I know a lot about the fishery. You do not have to get up and have a point of order on me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: I never said we put the crab fishery there. I just said that the crab fishery was good this year for people who live in my district, Mr. Speaker. It is good for the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: When we talk about the fishery, Mr. Speaker, we do not need somebody on the other side trying to make a joke of it. I can tell you that now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: The fishery in 3PS this year; as I said the crab fishery is down this year. The lobster fishery is down really low as always. Some say it is because of the green crab that the lobster fishery is down and the crab fishery. That may be true because we do have a lot of green crab in the Placentia Bay area.

In the Trinity Bay area the lobsters are up, and up in the Fortune Bay area. Where I represent the communities in Fortune Bay, the lobster season is doing really, really well. They tell me they are experimenting this year with the same kind of pots that they have in Nova Scotia. That is making a difference they are telling me.

Mr. Speaker, we have three plants in my district that are not doing so good. Negotiations are ongoing right now for the cod prices and that is hopefully moving forward. I talked to a guy the other day who is into negotiations there. He tells me that it is moving forward with the FFAW and the companies.

I am hoping they will arrive at a good price this year as opposed to last year. Last fall I know there were quite a few people who never got to sell to Icewater. Icewater did not buy last year,

but there were other plants that did buy. Once the prices are set – I guess they will be buying again now in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker, we also spent on aquaculture wharf investments of \$16.2 million in Harbour Breton, Pool's Cove, Hermitage, Sandy Cove and Milltown; the Centre for Aquaculture Health and Development, \$8.9 million; and, special grants, \$2.5 million. I just want to talk a little bit about that as well. The special grants in the districts with small communities, like I have, are very helpful to the fishermen's committees. It helps them fix up their community stages. It helps them fix up their wharves. It helps them with buying equipment around the wharves through the harbour authorities. Most of them are harbour authorities now. We used to have fishermen's committees at one time, but now we have mostly all harbour authorities. Those people avail of a lot of these special grants.

Roads and highways, ferry terminals, airports, \$1.7 billion in the last ten years; the Placentia lift bridge, \$51.9 million; and, new ferries in Fogo Island, Change Islands, and Bell Island. The projected cost for new vessels and the new wharf infrastructure is about \$140 million. Mr. Speaker, that is certainly not a waste of money.

You ask the people out there who are using these facilities. You go into Placentia when Placentia had the problem with the lift bridge and you tell them that the \$51 million you are going to put into Placentia to repair the lift bridge was a waste of money. That is basically what they said. We are squandering money, we wasted money. We should not have spent that \$51 million because that was a waste.

The Trans-Labrador Highway has approximately \$510.7 million in construction. There is close to 1,200 kilometres of highway connecting communities and creating new opportunities for residents. Work is still going on towards the finishing of this highway, Mr. Speaker.

Municipalities; being a past mayor myself in Norman's Cove for ten years, it certainly was good news to hear that our government was helping out the municipalities this year. Municipal buildings and other infrastructure, \$80.6 million; recreation infrastructure, \$177.9 million; water, sewer, and wastewater, \$667.9

million, and these are out to all the communities. Those are communities throughout my district and throughout all the other districts, from people here who are in the House of Assembly representing their districts. Everybody has seen some monies for water and sewer projects in their district, and it is a great thing.

Now, do we fix it all? No we do not. We do not fix it all, but we certainly help out some of the ones that do have problems with water and sewer. I am sure there will be a budget again this year. There will be monies put out this year by municipal affairs in the very near future. I am sure that people here avail of some of that money.

Mr. Speaker, local community road improvements, \$225.1 million; and, the Building Canada Fund, 139 projects have been completed to date. I just want to talk a little bit about the Building Canada Fund. Back in 2008-2009 when we had a Building Canada Fund, we had an overpass on the highway there in Sunnyside. They had been advocating for an overpass there for years because there were always accidents there on the double lane highway. When we got the Building Canada Fund back then they put an overpass there and it was a great job done. It certainly was not money wasted. You would not be able to tell anybody in Sunnyside that the money was wasted.

Mr. Speaker, I am getting as bad now as the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde. I have a job to find my notes. Health care: new research centres, \$50.2 million; addiction treatment centres, \$34.2 million; health care equipment, \$425.4 million; new long-term facilities, \$380.3 million, and the list goes on.

Talk to the people out there who are using those facilities and using the equipment. You talk to some of the people. If you listen to people on Open Line, you would swear our health care was the worst you ever could have, but you talk to some of the people who have been there and used it. Talk to some of them. I have letters and I have emails from the Clarenville hospital, from the St. John's hospital, and from people who had loved ones in there. They told me about the good care they had gotten.

No doubt about it our emergency rooms are blocked up. I mean there is a lot of aging population. We have an aging population and our emergency rooms are blocked up all the time. I hear that. I hear about five and six beds in the emergency room, people waiting to get a bed on stretchers. Mr. Speaker, we are aiming to look after that. We are aiming to free up some of those beds by building new long-term care homes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: The people on the other side do not want that. They do not want that. They do not want to see a long-term care home where we can free up ten or fifteen beds in a hospital, but the people want it. The people have said to us, look, you have to do something. You go into the hospital and you cannot get a bed for two or three days, you have to do something to free them up.

At one point in time in the Clarenville hospital we had nine people waiting to get into a long-term care home. If you build a long-term care home you would free it up really quickly, wouldn't you? I think that is a good step forward. Newfoundland and Labrador is home to fifteen hospitals, twenty-three community health centres, 119 community clinics, and twenty-three long-term care facilities.

Equipment in health care: dialysis equipment, \$8.2 million spent by this government; MRI equipment, \$10.5 million. I was in Burin just a short time back, myself and the Member for Placentia West and also the minister representing Grand Bank, we were there and some of the equipment that was being given out there, I tell you, there were a lot of happy people around there from all over the districts, from my district, from Grand Bank district, and from Placentia West. Ultrasound equipment: \$14.7 million; CT scanner, \$20.8 million. Mr. Speaker, there is a list of money that we spent over the years that certainly was not a waste of money and we definitely did not squander the money.

Mr. Speaker, K-12 education, over \$600 million invested in schools since 2004 in school infrastructure. Before I came into politics, I used to work with the Avalon North school

board at finished carpenter work. I saw the condition that the schools were in back in 2000 to 2004. I saw the condition. I saw the mould. I saw the roofs that were rotten. I saw the walls being just – what we used to call – scarfed up because what was happening was when you take off the outside board, the two-by-six would be gone, so they would say look, we do not have the money to fix it, so just put another piece of two-by-four on and try to find a place where you can drive a nail in. I saw all of that. That is only a short time ago.

When I came here in 2007, the government had started already repairing schools. I had schools in my district that had a lot of mould. I had schools in my district that needed the roofs repaired. I had schools in my district that needed siding and new windows. Mr. Speaker, they are done now. We do not have any complaints about the schools there now. A lot of the bad work is done.

We still need some work to be done. There is still work to be done, but the mould is gone. The children can go to school comfortably now. We do not have to have people out there monitoring the air in the schools all the time. There is no plastic on the ceiling. We have come a long way.

I just want to say to the people on the other side, my time is running out, I just want to say to them that all I put out there today in money is not money wasted.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PEACH: It is not money wasted. It is a good investment by this Province and a good investment by the people who are over on this side of the House. We have good management. Not like the ones over there. They say oh, we have the people over here. We have all the expertise over here.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very happy for the first time, since the Budget came down, to stand in my place and be a voice for the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, a voice of reason. Mr. Speaker, often when I am driving through the district I think a first-class people lives here, from one end to the other, a first-class people. What saddens me that it is a first-class people with a second-class service, and many times third.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Bellevue – and I listened to him intently. He talked about out in his district being an economic driver for the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Member for Bellevue: Where is the ore coming from? Where is the ore coming from in your district? Where is it coming from?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I hope that the people in his district are getting a better return on the dollar, they are driving better roads, and they are living in better conditions than the people in the district that I represent. It saddens me.

When I began to prepare, Mr. Speaker, I thought twenty minutes and I have so many issues. I have said it before there are people over there who can stand up and they can say to me you know, I have cell problems in my area. Someone else might stand and say I have bad roads in my area.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: Someone else might say I have a ferry issue in my area. Someone else might say I have a broadband issue in my area. Do you know what is different, Mr. Speaker? I

represent a district and we have them all. There is something wrong with that. A lot of the times it seems like I am singing from the same hymn book with the resources coming out and so little coming back. When things have not changed, I have to stick to the facts as they are.

I have been listening the last few days and I have a job to believe that people can stand and hold their head with this Budget, Mr. Speaker. I have only been here in the House since the fall of 2013 and I have been amazed again and again and again; \$25 billion in oil money, a staggering figure. So then we sit and we gather and we wait for the Budget to be read. What do we get, Mr. Speaker? The biggest deficit in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador – unbelievable.

It will be no surprise to people – I have to start by mentioning the ferry. People are still outraged about the ferry. They are outraged. Mr. Speaker, I say, I am looking at a minister over there, this is not personal. This is about a government that has not treated the people fairly, that have not put proper planning in place, that have had no vision, and people that I represent are among the people who have paid the price for that. They put out an RFP and they began to do their homework after.

I said it before, if there is anyone in Newfoundland and Labrador who does not know about the ferry woes in the Strait of Belle Isle, they must have been hiding with their head under a rock. Every day I listen to issues in the House and I think about the major issue we have. How can we begin to grow our economy? How can we invite tourism in? How can we take part in that billion-dollar industry, Mr. Speaker, when we are still back trying to move people from point A to point B?

As recent as yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I was getting messages from businesses saying we are still struggling through the ice. The icebreaker came in and did a little video the other day; they got across and then she left again. I guess they took the clip up to Ottawa somewhere and they are going to use it for something, but it is the people who are far down the list, Mr. Speaker, and that is very, very sad.

I look at one minister and he has a new ferry coming, Fogo, Bell Island, Mr. Speaker. So I

say to the Minister of Transportation and Works: Stand up, when you go for twenty minutes on your feet, be honest and be upfront with the people of Labrador and tell them how much longer they have to wait. We are using a forty-year old boat, Mr. Speaker, a Scandinavian reject. She had served her time before she came into the Strait of Belle Isle, and we have older people and we have children – I do not know if you have been on it, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps you will go on it this summer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: I would say, Mr. Speaker, we asked questions again and again and again in the House because we knew there were issues, we had concerns, and as late as March month, we were still being told that the commitment for 2016 was still year. What happens, Mr. Speaker? A couple of weeks later we find out it is not even on the table.

I say stand and tell the people. I have heard from many mayors who have been in the gallery and who have contacted me around this consultation piece. The feedback that I am hearing in my district is that it is an insult to the people of Labrador. It is a joke. This is not a new service. This is a service that this government has been providing for decades, Mr. Speaker. So if there is anybody who do not know what we need by now, there is something wrong. There is something wrong if you have to go back and talk to the people in the communities. People see through it, Mr. Speaker. It is nothing more than a PR exercise and a stall tactic and I can tell you, there is a lot of unrest in Labrador about it.

I have had emails I should say to the minister from all around the Province, people who say – and I sit beside them; every weekend on the flight I sit beside people going to Labrador to work and they say until I have been working in Labrador, I really did not know how far back you guys were with basic, basic things like ferries and roads.

I talk a lot about roads, Mr. Speaker. I have to mention my good friend Blair because I have been thinking about him – Blair Gillis from

Cartwright. We just drove the road again on the weekend to Goose Bay. I was happy to have our leader up in the district with me and we had a couple of fantastic events. When you get close to Goose Bay, the last part of the road that was built, the best shape road that there is, guess where the asphalt is going first? Not how it was originally planned to go. Initially, there was an announcement of Phase I that was Lab West to Goose Bay and because of all the bungle with Humber Valley Paving and all that, we have eleven kilometres left to do on that part. Phase II was to be Red Bay to Cartwright Junction, and Phase III was Goose Bay.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier was the Minister for Transportation and Works in the spring of 2013 and that was the first I heard about roadwork being done on the Goose Bay end. I asked him when he came into Combined Councils to speak – I said: What happened to the announcement of Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III? Why are you now putting first pavement on the newest part of the road that is the least travelled? Because in my district, Mr. Speaker, we have a cluster of communities that heavily travel that area every single day. One community has a bank. One community has a Family Resource Centre. People travel from several communities from May to October to work at the shrimp plant in Charlottetown.

I asked the man who is now the Premier: Why are you starting – what happened to the initial announcements? He looked at me – I was representing the community of Charlottetown at that time in the capacity of deputy mayor and he said: Well, Ms Dempster, you think the pavement should start here – and there were many witnesses that day in the room – and someone else thinks the pavement should start there. He said: In the end, we had to start somewhere.

I was speechless, Mr. Speaker. I said: I guess that is what you call planning – I guess that is what you call planning. Someone says we should start here and someone says we should start there and, in the end, we have to start somewhere.

Mr. Speaker, we see indications of how things have rolled out by this government like that in many regards and I am going to take some time

to go through some – but I believe that we can still change that. Asphalt starting on the Northern end should never be. I had five mayors in from my district last fall. We met with the minister. We were going to have asphalt for Red Bay North announced before the end of the year.

Now since we have been in Estimates I am very, very saddened to find out it looks like we are not getting asphalt at all this year, Mr. Speaker, an eighty-five kilometre stretch of road from Red Bay North down to beautiful world heritage sites – Battle Harbour. We have the Mealy Mountain Park.

Parks Canada is waiting to infuse \$35 million into Mealy Mountain Park. I think it is \$2.65 million every year they are going to do after. Why are we not there yet, Mr. Speaker? We are not there because this government has been holding onto the files since 2007.

We talk about small communities and helping to make communities sustainable so that they can help themselves move along and get off their dependence from government. Mr. Speaker, they are not being given a chance. They are not being given the help they afford. Two more consultation sessions now, we have been pushing it along – two more consultation sessions. It is going to be back on the minister's desk on Tuesday is my understanding, and then we will start hammering at that again.

The Mealy Mountain Park, gateway to the North, it has to happen. We need that \$35 million. The agreement has already been signed by NunatuKavut. I understand the Member for Torngat Mountains, the people in his area is happy with how it is. I mention that as a side note. I digress, but many positive things that could come and they are being held up.

The tourism development officer – from probably my first day in the House, I have been in the media about this. I have been petitioning about this. We have so many tourism opportunities. We want to get in on this billion-dollar industry. We want to help ourselves, Mr. Speaker.

We have Point Amour. Not point armour, as the Finance Minister said when he was reading the

Budget. We have Point Amour, the tallest lighthouse in Atlantic Canada. We have Red Bay, we have Battle Harbour, and we have all kinds. Yet, Mr. Speaker, we see that when a gentleman who was filling this position retired, it was never filled.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the minister got up in Question Period and he said we are happy with what we are contributing to the tourism industry in Labrador. Well I can tell you that the people in Labrador are not happy, the people who live there, the people who want this position filled. Here is a note that I had just the other day, Mr. Speaker, on this from a municipality in the region that said: I am really sick of politics overruling good decisions for the people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, a tourism development officer to market some of what we have is going to bring in investment. People are tired of the piecemeal, of the lack of planning, and time and again we have some much that is a solid case that we can bring forward but it falls on deaf ears. They are not listening. When you go around the Province, people know. It has been a decade or more, people know.

People have said to me again and again, people who do not even follow the House, the proceedings, not into policy or politics, people say: They have not listened. People talk about some of the high-level things like Bill 29. When I spoke on Bill 29 a little while ago and I did some research, I could not believe how much backlash there was at the time, yet they ploughed on through, Mr. Speaker. What happened? A million dollars later we are back with Bill 1. That is just one example.

Humber Valley Paving, almost \$20 million. There are a lot of sad stories when I think about what could be done in my district for that amount of money. There are a lot of missed opportunities, absolutely, and people are paying the price for that, Mr. Speaker.

Broadband: We live in a technological age. I just mentioned I had the leader up in my district. Mr. Speaker, he could not even check his emails, even basic emails, in the community of Charlottetown on a Blackberry, on an iPhone, on

nothing, that is how bad it is. Until you live there, you cannot appreciate the frustration.

The problem with that is when you have a government that is pushing people to do things online and they have left regions completely out. They have not moved them along. They have not given them the infrastructure they have needed, Mr. Speaker. You get a rebate back if you renew your motor vehicle registration online. What happens to the people who cannot get online to do that, Mr. Speaker?

Service NL is promoting things like BizPal and things like that. It puts the people who do not have adequate broadband at a very unfair disadvantage, Mr. Speaker. What it does is it continues to exasperate, in my mind, the rural, urban economic divide. It is very, very sad. I will continue, on behalf of the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, to keep the issues of broadband front and centre.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of things I wanted to touch on in my district area, but I also want to touch on my critic area too because there are lots of good stuff there. Muskrat Falls: Right from day one I was up on Muskrat Falls and no matter what question you asked, there were always answers on the other side, but the truth of it is it is a mess. We called for an ombudsman to oversee the hiring, to bring some fairness to this. That did not happen. Every single day my colleague from Torngat, myself, my office, and many others, we get calls from people looking for work there. The only two independent bodies, the PUB and the Joint Review Panel, did not get to finish their work because it got pushed through.

We always get answers. The other day we found out there were 124 labourers who were hired, and 117 were from outside Labrador. Those are the labourer positions. So we said, now, what is the answer they are going to come back with from this? For sure they are going to have an answer, there is always an answer. Well, we did not understand. There are eleven different classifications of labourers; yet, every single weekend I sit on a flight to and from Labrador – the bus is waiting, the big buses are waiting – and then I go home to my district.

There are lots of qualified people who want to find work there, who cannot get on the project. Nobody is checking driver's licences, cross-referencing it with resumes, and it is a crime. It is a crime, it is very sad. Qualified people who should be working – emails as recent as this week saying they are looking for carpenters, and we have lots of carpenters looking for work. I cannot stand without mentioning that, because it is one of the main topics that I hear everywhere I go in my district.

The proposed commercial rates, Mr. Speaker, myself and my colleague from Torngat have petitioned many times on that. It has been submitted. I have requested to present at that hearing, we are still waiting for dates. I believe it is absolutely wrong. Once again, when you are going to choose the smallest communities with aging population, with seniors who are already choosing between going to the clinic and buying their pills or staying warm in their house, when that is the people we are going to try and balance the books of this Province on by increasing rates, it is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention a couple of things. I am happy to be critic for the department, about a billion dollar department, Advanced Education and Skills. I take that very serious. I get calls from all over the Province from people on Income Support, from people who have trades and apprenticeship issues. It is near and dear to my heart, because I worked as a career and employment counsellor for twenty-three years dealing with some of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I was going through last night some of the strategies this government have put out that they would do. I concluded at the end of the evening, after I did my homework, that the next thing they need to do is come up with a strategy to help them implement their strategies. That is all I can see.

Persons with disabilities; NL performed worst. This Province performed worst in employment retention for persons with disabilities across Canada. Thirty-five per cent of those who had been working in 2011 were no longer working in 2012. For three years we have been waiting for government to launch an action plan to actually put their strategy for persons with disabilities into action – three years, Mr. Speaker.

Population Growth Strategy; here we are a population of just over 500,000; 93,000 seniors by 2025. One in every four people is going to be a senior; lots of issues. We see this was an office that was created in 2012, and at the time Dunderdale, the Premier at the time, said this is real work that needs to get done – real work. It almost sounded like a sense of urgency, like something important, like it mattered. Here we are in the spring of 2015 and nothing is happening. We are still waiting. We are still waiting for the Population Growth Strategy; yet, we have the fastest aging population in Canada, a population that is aging and declining.

The Adult Literacy Plan was committed to in 2007, and still no strategy – almost nine years. According to Stats Canada, less than half, 43 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have Level III literacy or higher. Mr. Speaker, Level III is the level required to cope in a modern society and here we are eight, nine years waiting for an Adult Literacy plan.

Poverty reduction; four years later we are still waiting. I am not making it up, Mr. Speaker. I just went to the books they gave us, their own books, and pulled all of this out. Back in 2011-2012, a strategic plan for the former Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, they committed to begin implementation of the new four-year Poverty Reduction Action Plan, and we are still waiting, Mr. Speaker.

Apprenticeship – my time is almost gone and I did not get to half of my good stuff. The Journeyperson Mentorship Program announced in 2012 with a goal of training up to 200 apprentices – going to train 200 apprentices – and in year one, they trained five. There are so many examples that I could get. Now, I do not have my estimates for it yet, until May 25, but a quick glance through the Budget, it looks like \$2 million was cut from supporting apprentices.

We are in a very sad state I say, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to speaking again on the many, many issues that we have concerns on in the Province.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Port de Grave, 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.'

This 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.