



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVII

FOURTH SESSION

Number 17

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

Wednesday

May 20, 2015

The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I am pleased to welcome today to the public gallery Mr. Rajesh Sharma, CEO of Tata Steel Minerals Canada and Vice-President of Operations, Praveen Jha.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: As well as Cathy Dornan, Chief Resident Executive.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I am also very pleased today to welcome to the Speaker's gallery: Ava Shibler, or shall I say Premier Ava Shibler. She is a Grade 1, Topsail Elementary, student who is Premier for a Day. She is here today along with her dad, Eric.

Welcome Premier Shibler.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before beginning proceedings for the day, I have to make a ruling on a point of privilege that was raised on May 14 by the Member for Terra Nova. Hansard and the video recording of the exchanges giving rise to this question of privilege have been reviewed.

Before proceeding, I must state that I do have great concern with respect to the level of provocation and unruliness that seems to have arisen in our debates in this House, but first I will address the question of privilege.

The issue was raised because of comments made by the Member for the Bay of Islands to the Member for Terra Nova suggesting that the Member for Terra Nova – and I quote from Hansard – “... do some preaching or go back to church ...”

The Member for Terra Nova raised a point of order on this issue earlier in the debate. The Chair found that there was no point of order.

O'Brien and Bosc, page 637, states, “A Member may not...raise a matter as a question of privilege after the Speaker has ruled that it was not a point of order.”

Consequently, I wish to rule there is no prima facie question of privilege and that under these circumstances the Member for Terra Nova is not able to raise the matter as such, given that the same matter had already been ruled upon.

However, I would like to give further comment. This debate arose as a result of personalized comments being directed in this House at other members.

This Speaker and the Chairs will not tolerate language that is personalized, provocative or likely to give rise to disruption and disorder in the House. During debate, comments to the opposite side of the House as a collective group may be quite acceptable, but this does not hold true when the same comments are directed at individual members. O'Brien and Bosc on page 618 states, “Personal attacks ... are not in order.”

The Speaker of our own House ruled on this November 13, 1991, and found at page 2486 of Hansard, “If these words were used in the governmental or the opposition sense, in the collective sense, then they are not unparliamentary. But if such words were used in the individual sense, then they are clearly unparliamentary.”

I remind all members of this House debate is not to be personalized, not to be directed to individual members of the House. As stated by the Speaker of the House of Commons on December 9, 1980, in Debates, page 5534, and I quote, the characteristics of Parliamentary language are good temper and moderation.

Also, as was stated in this House yesterday, O'Brien and Bosc states at page 618, “... the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order.” I further quote, “The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect ...”

We come to this House to debate important issues; we must adhere to our parliamentary expectations and traditions and conduct ourselves with respect for each member and for the process.

In the future, I would like to let all members know in advance, if the Speaker determines that a member is engaging in debate that is unparliamentary, then the Speaker will rise and ask the member to withdraw his or her comments. If the member refuses, then we will follow the procedure outlined in our Standing Orders and the member will be escorted out of the Chamber by the Sergeant at Arms.

However, if the member does withdraw, but then continues to engage in debate that is provocative or personal, then the Speaker will rise again, request that the member withdraw his or her comments; however, at that time, the member will not be recognized to continue speaking.

Thank you very much.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear members' statements from the members representing the Districts of Port de Grave, Labrador West, Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, The Straits – White Bay North, St. John's Centre, and Port au Port.

The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you.

We "goat" this! Today I salute Ascension Collegiate for their Free the Children initiatives – We Act and We Day. Free the Children is an organization with a goal to empower a generation to shift the world from me to we, from a focus on the individual to the power of community – in this case, the school community.

Through Free the Children and We Day, students were challenged to take one local and one global action to better the world. Thus, the Ready, Set, Goat Campaign to raise funds to send goats to families in Sierra Leone. From May 11-15 all organized groups in the school,

sports teams, clubs, and independent groups were challenged to raise funds for this initiative.

There are huge gains to getting a goat for a family. Goats produce sixteen cups of milk daily which can be sold or used to supplement students' meals and provide much needed protein. Goats can be bred to help pay for school fees, vaccinations, and other life-changing essentials. One goat can change a child's life and a community's potential.

Through the Ready, Set, Goat Campaign more than sixty goats will be purchased and over \$3,000 raised to support Free the Children. Ascension Collegiate, you "goat" this!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand in this hon. House today to congratulate the many local businesses that came together to support the Labrador West Food Bank. Scott Pynn, owner and operator of a local business in Labrador West, challenged his Facebook followers to donate money or food goods to have their name put in for a gift certificate draw valued at \$500 from his business.

The local food bank has been hit hard with a spike in clients due to the economic downturn in the area. The challenge quickly snowballed into a business community-wide food drive in Labrador West. Prizes and gift certificates are pouring in.

The initial plan was to run the food drive until the end of the summer and then have the draw, but with so many generous gift donations from local businesses there is now enough to have weekly draws. Every dollar donated and every food item donated earns a ballot for the draw of prizes.

In a time when Labrador businesses are being hit hard by the downturn, they still dig deep and help others. Kindness has a domino effect. All it takes is one person to start it.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the businesses of Labrador West on this huge act of kindness.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear

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

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

They say grammar and spelling are arts lost to our younger generation. Anyone who thinks that should meet Greta Warner, a Grade 6 student at Bishop Feild School in my district. On Saturday, Greta leaves for an unforgettable trip – as the winner of the 2015 Telegram Spelling Bee, she will represent this Province at the fabled Scripps National Spelling Bee.

The eleven-year-old has worked all year, practising words with her mother, Rochelle Baker, and her father, Patrick Warner. She is proof that hard work yields results. In last year's bee, she heard the dreaded "ding" from the judges on her first word. This year, she won the competition – held, I must mention, also in Signal Hill Quidi Vidi at the Holy Heart Auditorium.

Greta will travel to Washington, meet 284 other like-minded students from eight countries, and enjoy all the excitement of the spelling bee at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbour, Maryland. Hopefully, she will also get to explore Washington a bit with her parents.

I ask all members of this House to congratulate Greta Warner, 2015 Telegram Spelling Bee champion for Newfoundland and Labrador, and to wish her well on her voyage next week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, Grade 2 student Breanna Clarke is an inspiration! After watching the Janeway Telethon in 2013 at five years old, she had many questions as to why children were at the Janeway, unable to go home

with their families, and why money was needed. After getting answers from her parents, Scott and Regina, she wanted to help the sick kids of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Last year, she started a walk in her hometown of Main Brook with the support of her parents. Breanna's efforts continued with additional fundraisers leading up to this past Saturday, when her second walk began.

Not only did she raise funds for a very worthwhile cause, she brought together a community with her efforts. Last year, only close family members joined but this year she had more than two dozen community members, including the RMCP and fire department.

Breanna was full of smiles and had lots to celebrate since she was able to raise more than \$2,500 this year for the Janeway, and she cannot wait to do it all again.

I ask all hon. members to congratulate Breanna Clarke for helping out many sick children in this Province by raising funds for the children's hospital.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This weekend St. John's bids "A Brave Farewell" to an institution that has developed thousands of young minds since it opened as a Salvation Army school in 1960. Booth Memorial welcomed kids from every possible background, and most city neighbourhoods – even outside the city; St. Phillips students were once bused to Booth.

Booth had the Province's first infant child care centre so student parents could continue their studies and graduate. This was an incredibly brave – no pun intended – and progressive thing to do when it opened in 1992. At Booth, the arts have been nurtured, and the Braves sports teams compete with unmatched spirit.

This weekend, the festivities include an arts night on Friday, hosted by my colleague for Conception Bay South, a former principal of Booth. On Saturday, the school throws its doors open for tours, a barbecue lunch, a meet and greet, and much more.

Next year, the school doors will be closed, the Braves will become Warriors at Waterford Valley High, but the impact of everything that Booth Memorial meant to its community will not ever go away.

Bravo to the teachers, the parents, the students, the staff, and everyone who made this centre-city high school an extraordinary place to learn.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege and the honour to attend a formal dinner at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 35 in Stephenville on April 25 to celebrate the 220th anniversary of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment better than the best.

The Royal Newfoundland Regiment has a rich and renowned history. The tremendous contributions and enormous sacrifices that have been made by our servicemen and women have been and continue to be felt all over the world and should never be forgotten. From its involvement in the War of 1812 to Cyprus, Bosnia, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, members of this regiment have served proudly and courageously in the name of peace and liberty.

The Honour 100 program recognizes the contribution of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment to the freedom of this great Province. This program endeavours to ensure that future generations remember and honour the contributions of the regiment during the First World War.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join with me in thanking all uniformed services that have served, and continue to serve, to protect our way

of life, our values, and the freedoms we enjoy today.

Merci à tous et à toutes pour votre contribution et sacrifice.

Merci, thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize the work of Tata Steel Minerals Canada and their new mining project in Labrador. I am delighted that representatives from the company could join us today – Rajesh Sharma, CEO; Praveen Jha, Vice-President of Operations; and Cathy Dornan, Chief Resident Executive.

Tata Steel is a Fortune 500 company and one of the top ten steel companies in the world with over 80,000 employees worldwide. Tata Steel and Tata Steel Minerals Canada are part of the Tata Group – a global enterprise headquartered in India with operations in more than 100 countries across six continents.

For the last three years, Tata Steel Minerals Canada has been constructing a new iron ore mine in Labrador's northern Menihek region which will be fully operational by late 2015. The high-grade iron ore will be processed locally before being shipped directly to Tata Steel plants in Europe.

This project represents a \$1 billion investment in the Labrador Trough and is employing 500 people in Labrador during the construction phase. Approximately 300 to 350 people will be employed during long-term operations currently estimated to last at least fifteen years.

Despite challenging iron ore markets, Tata Steel Minerals Canada is committed to this project and to its investment in the Province. As well,

there is potential for the company to further develop resources in the Labrador Trough through their partner New Millennium Iron.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be ranked in the top ten of the most attractive jurisdictions worldwide for mineral exploration investment in the Fraser Institute of Canada's International Mining Survey.

Our Province has a proven record of discovery and we are home to the development of major world-class deposits. We are known globally as a mining-friendly competitive jurisdiction with a stable royalty regime and a fair and streamlined regulatory environment.

The people working within the iron ore industry of Newfoundland and Labrador are determined, resilient, and hard working. I applaud the efforts of Tata Steel Minerals Canada, and of all our industry partners, in providing such a valuable contribution to our Province. We will continue to work together to secure a solid future for mining in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement today. I certainly welcome the representatives from Tata Steel here today. I am pleased that they were able to join us in the House of Assembly. I also want to congratulate Tata on being very persistent in what has been a very volatile iron ore market.

This project has already contributed substantial investment and jobs to the Province and it stands to generate long-term employment and future benefits for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The Tata Group is a very unique company. It is very philanthropic in its distribution of proceeds throughout the world. When you look at the provincial economy and see that all the very important economic indicators are moving in the wrong direction, it is clear that we need to create

the environment of success for companies like Tata Steel.

We know that the Canadian iron ore companies are typically in the third to fourth quartile of cost structure, so it is essential that we make sure that we give them the competitive advantage to overcome the challenges that they need to invest here in our Province. This includes regulatory processes that happen in a timely fashion working in collaboration so that we can retain the investments of companies like Tata Steel.

I wish the company all of the success and their employees for many years of business in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very pleased to stand with my colleagues in the House and say congratulations to Tata Steel Minerals Canada for having the vision to invest in Labrador at a time when low ore prices are causing difficulties for other companies mining iron ore. I hope more people share Tata's vision and see the immense benefits of investing in the people of Labrador and not just taking the ore out, but doing processing there before sending it on.

Placing their confidence in the people of Labrador and in the long-term prospects for iron ore is, I think, the right move. I hope other mining companies sit up and take notice of Tata Steel, and I wish them well in our Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Conservation is partnering with rod and gun clubs in St. John's and Deer Lake to offer two Youth Hunter Skills Workshops next month. I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to encourage young people to participate in these sessions which promote safe and responsible involvement in hunting and trapping and other outdoor activities.

During these one-day workshops, youth between the ages of twelve and seventeen will learn important hunting safety techniques for shotgun, rifle, and archery equipment, along with tips on outdoor safety and survival skills and other important lessons about wildlife conservation and management.

Mr. Speaker, participation in hunting and trapping is a very significant part of our culture and heritage and plays an important role in practical wildlife conservation and management. The Stewardship and Education Section of my department's Wildlife Division is responsible for administering education awareness programs that foster safe and responsible use of wildlife resources and the habitat upon which they depend. Programs include the Canada Firearm Safety/Hunter Education Course, Trapper Education Course, Bowhunter Education, and other workshops and events that encourage safe, responsible, and knowledgeable participation while supporting recruitment and retention of hunters and trappers.

Organizations like local rod and gun clubs are important partners in these efforts. Through knowledgeable and experienced members, they help promote awareness about wildlife conservation throughout the Province and allow the general public to learn and practice hunting skills in a suitable and safe environment.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the members and volunteers of the St. John's Rod and Gun Club and the Upper Humber Rod and Gun Club for their efforts and wishing them success during these workshops, planned for June 6 and 13.

Mr. Speaker, by teaching our youth safe and responsible hunting and trapping techniques now, we are ensuring a future generation of safe and responsible hunters and trappers who

respect and appreciate all our Province's natural heritage has to offer.

For those interested in learning more, details about how to pre-register will be made available through the department in the coming days and additional information about other hunter and trapper education and outreach programs is currently available on the department's website.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Certainly we should teach our youth these important life skills about safe hunting and trapping, responsibility, and experience the important part of our culture, especially the activities that are truly a fabric of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I believe that the government, in supporting these activities though, is not going far enough when it comes to enabling our youth to put these skills into practice and building the bonds with adult family members. We have the highest age restrictions in place for hunters in the country. Why – if you are supporting these initiatives – are you not looking at lowering the big game hunting age from eighteen years of age and small game hunting to lower, yet firearm safety and hunting education is available at fourteen years of age?

The Upper Humber Rod and Gun association is on record saying people who start hunting at a younger age develop better skills of hunting responsibility and handling firearms in a safe manner. The government's regressive regulations are causing residents and families to go to other provinces and deterring the non-resident hunters from bringing their youth here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Anglers and hunters continue to point to government's failure to address the age restrictions on hunting. I support them in their cause.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. While visiting heritage fairs I met a number of young people who were interested in hunting, fishing, and trapping, and it showed in their presentations. They were proud because it is what their families have been doing for generations. They enjoyed learning skills from their parents and grandparents. This is embracing our culture and our heritage.

It is great to see these workshops being offered and it is incredibly important to teach safety. Rifles, shotguns, and bows are powerful weapons and must be handled properly, responsibly, and with respect. The Province should investigate holding mentored hunting programs where youth can learn many of the techniques for hunting through participating in an actual hunt with a licensed adult supervisor. To all hunters, young and old, Mr. Speaker, I recommend wearing blaze orange while hunting.

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.

In 2012, government signed a deal with Ocean Choice International allowing the company to ship out unprocessed fish in exchange for 110 full-time processing jobs at the Fortune fish plant, but it was confirmed yesterday by the minister that the plant would not be open. There is only twenty weeks work planned for this year. The plant is not open and merely twenty weeks work for this year.

I ask the Premier: Why are you allowing OCI to not live up to the commitments it made to this Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The fact of the matter is that OCI has lived up to the terms of their agreement. They have invested heavily in the plant in Fortune, almost \$2 million, Mr. Speaker. Their plan originally was about \$1 million worth of investment. They have actually made almost \$2 million worth of an investment. They have secured another vessel which is hiring Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They have lived up to that obligation as well, Mr. Speaker.

What they have experienced is smaller fish than what their business plan had allowed for. A higher percentage of fish was less than 400 grams than what they had anticipated, Mr. Speaker, and that has had an impact. We are working with the operator, we are working with the union and stakeholders, the town, the people of Fortune as well, to ensure that we keep this plant open and operational. This year there will be twenty weeks of work, is what is anticipated right now by OCI, and we are looking forward to them getting underway in early June, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is reported today in the media that government allowed OCI to ship out at least 1.4 million pounds of additional fish in 2014. This is in addition to their 2012 agreement.

Since the Premier is speaking for OCI today, I ask the Premier: Since OCI is breaking their 2012 commitment to Fortune, why are you allowing them even more exemptions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite does not have to be a little bit coy as he has been here in saying I am speaking for OCI. He is asking me the questions. He is asking me all sorts of government questions, Mr. Speaker, and we will provide him with the information.

I can tell you, MPR is a complex business, Mr. Speaker. MPRs are about providing best value and best opportunity for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is an opportunity to work with industry. It is an opportunity to work with the union that represents harvesters, that represents plant workers. It is an opportunity to work with the plant workers themselves, and also towns and communities that rely heavily on the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

Doing MPRs and working with those industries is providing best value to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and that is what the fishery is all about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I challenge the Premier on his comments about doing MPRs. Remember, this is what he wanted to give away in the CETA agreement. Right now with the exemptions it creates less work in our plants. Over one-third of the total approved exemptions in 2014 do not indicate a specific amount that is allowed to be shipped out.

I ask the Premier: Why are you not attaching a maximum amount to one-third of your approved exemptions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned, MPRs are a complex piece of work that happens between government and industry stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, in order to provide best value to Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians. I can tell you we would be quite pleased to offer a technical briefing to members opposite. We would be quite pleased to have officials as well provide a technical briefing to members of the media if they want to understand the complexities of MPRs.

The agreement in Fortune had nothing to do with cod, Mr. Speaker. The agreement in Fortune is about yellowtail, a species that is not popular amongst processors in Newfoundland and Labrador. They were willing to make investments to find an opportunity to process yellowtail in Fortune so they can provide jobs for the people of Fortune. We stand by those people who are looking for those employment opportunities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the Premier that during the CETA arrangements the MPRs were something that his own government could not put a value on.

Mr. Speaker, Humber Valley Paving is in Supreme Court today in relation to a construction job in Southern Labrador. This is a separate contract from the one that the government cancelled the day before the PC leadership race releasing \$19 million in bonds.

I ask the Premier: What is the status of the \$1.18 million bond holdback that you cancelled from the Humber Valley Paving contract?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to note to the House, that money is still in trust – the \$1.18 million in trust. We are going through the court process. We have encouraged people, if they have a mechanics' lien that they feel relevant to that particular project, to put it through the court system.

We are assessing every day. Every week my officials look to the courts to see where we are. We are going through the process, Mr. Speaker, and as the weeks unfold we will be getting closer and closer to making some determinations with the court system.

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.

My mind reflected back, I think it was to mid-March, March 23, when the minister said he was working with the court system to identify a process for people who have legitimate claims against Humber Valley Paving to be reimbursed. So that was eight weeks ago. He mentioned back on March 23 that, "Over the next couple of weeks, I will have something to announce in the House of Assembly about the full end of that process."

I ask the Premier: It has been over eight weeks, as I said, since this statement; why haven't you made this announcement?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I noted earlier, this is an ongoing process within the court system. We do not control the time frames within the court system. What we do is work within the court system to ensure that people do get their due diligence here and those who have a legitimate claim will be taken care of.

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.

There are small companies in our Province that has been waiting a long time for payment from this mechanics' lien holdback.

I ask the minister: Can you please clarify, stand on your feet and you say it is coming soon, very soon, in a couple of weeks – when can this process be made public to the people who are owed the money? They rightfully deserve it.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I have noted before in this House, those who have a legitimate claim against Humber Valley Paving on that particular contract, this is being assessed through the court system. Those who have a legitimate claim, no doubt, will be rectified and they will receive that.

This is a court process, as the member opposite is aware of. There is a process that has to be followed. We hope in the near future this will be rectified and those who have legitimate claims will indeed be reimbursed.

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.

Since there is an established process that the minister is talking about, will these small companies that have to go through this court process that the minister outlined, simply because one of your colleagues, one of your other ministers cancelled the bonds from Humber Valley – will this government now pay for the court costs of these small companies?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I need to clarify the process here. There is a mechanics' lien that is held back on every contract that government signs with any contractor out there, Mr. Speaker. That is to protect those sub-contractors who feel that they did indeed supply a service or a product, but are owed money and have not been paid through that process. We hold the money in trust, Mr. Speaker. That is the legal responsibility we have.

The court system is the court system. It is an outlined process where companies go through the court system, through Small Claims Court, and make their claims. The courts decide exactly what is owed. Under that process, we then release the money to the proponents so they can then pay out to the people who felt and had been ruled that they have a legitimate claim against that particular contractor.

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.

We are all aware of the ongoing issues in Labrador West. There are presently over 2,500 outstanding grievances between the union and IOC waiting to be resolved.

I ask the Premier: What role is your government playing in resolving those outstanding grievances with IOC?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the circumstances that are affecting mining globally are impacting Newfoundland and Labrador as well. We have seen the impacts of that already in Labrador West. While some companies, as we heard about earlier today, are continuing to make investments in Newfoundland and Labrador, we know that there are also others that are

struggling in their own operations, within their own shops, Mr. Speaker.

We offer support and services to companies who have conflicts and internal matters that they want to resolve and want to work together to resolve, Mr. Speaker. It is no different in Labrador West; we will do it with IOC as well. We certainly encourage all members of the IOC family, workers, workers' representatives, and management to make all their best efforts to keep that operation viable and operating in Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that the number of grievances that I just mentioned is continuing to increase in that area. One option that the union has called for is an industrial inquiry.

I ask the Premier: What other options have you considered; and, if there are none, are you reconsidering the call for the industrial inquiry into IOC?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Labour Relations Agency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, through the Labour Relations Agency we offer a broad range of services to support industry, certainly employers, unions, from instances where there are issues arising between them. Obviously the first priority is that those are worked out with those partners in terms of issues that arise.

We do provide services through the Labour Relations Agency. We will in this case as well to try to work through these issues. Again, we certainly encourage them to work through them, but we are there for support through the Labour Relations Agency. We will do everything we can. We know how important the industry is to Labrador, and all the industry of Newfoundland

and Labrador, and we will continue to work collectively with them to find solutions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, several years ago government commissioned a report into youth sexual exploitation, yet refuses to disclose the report. Stakeholders claim that as many as 100 youth are involved in the local sex trade.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services: Has he read the report; and, if so, can he confirm that this estimate is generally true?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, there is very little I can add to the discussion that the minister already provided to this House, and the Premier, with regard to the sex exploitation report. I can only take the member's question and pass it on to the minister and make an undertaking to give that answer back in the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the question was to the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services because stakeholders say as many as 100 youth are involved in the local sex trade.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, not the Attorney General – Child, Youth and Family Services if he has read the report and is it generally true?

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, I am very familiar with the report. I am also familiar with the sensitivities that lie within it. I think if I were to echo what the Attorney General had just said, in echoing what the Minister of Justice has said previously, the sensitivities around that and the reasons for not allowing that information to go out publicly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, of the youth involved in the local sex trade, can the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services advise how many of them were once the responsibility of his department?

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 cannot give him a number here today. I would certainly endeavour to look into that and provide any information that I can.

As I have said before, quite frankly, any information that I can provide publicly, either to the public, I will. When it involves the Child and Youth Advocate, there is a proactive disclosure with her as well. I have no issue whatsoever. If I can respond to the hon. member, I certainly will.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, at sixteen, youth can sign themselves out of care of Child, Youth and Family Services. However, government policy will not allow them to sign themselves back into care if they realize they cannot make it on their own, indifferent to their plea as government forces them to go it alone.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services: How can you justify leaving

vulnerable youth to live on their own, prey for pimps, drug dealers, and other hardened criminals who further victimize them?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the member continues down the road of his commentary. That he adds to it, and gross commentary, if I can say, with regard to talking about many of our vulnerable youth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: If I could finish I would appreciate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I have said quite clearly on a number of occasions how we have actually enhanced that legislation around Youth Services. We have extended the age of custody to eighteen recently. Some of the things we provide – because we do, we provide an umbrella of services to youth.

It is a voluntary service. However, if they choose to stay within that service there is an umbrella of services that we are able to provide, things such as financial management, housing stability, general life skills, education, and emotional healing, all of which are very important.

We have come quite a ways with regard to Youth Services in this Province. I am very proud of the work this government has done, in particular with regard to the Department of CYFS enhancing that service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, the Marystown Shipyard Families Alliance has been in existence for ten years now. The Alliance is of the belief that family members were exposed to dangerous chemicals while on the job at the shipyard and ended up diagnosed with cancer – some have died. After months of lobbying, the previous minister finally promised to meet with the Alliance, but within two days of agreeing to do so, he resigned from Cabinet.

So I ask the Minister Responsible for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission today: Will he now take up this cause and agree to meet with these distressed families?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I appreciate the question and being able to provide some clarification. The member is not aware, I have actually responded to the group on April 15 offering my willingness to meet with the group. I have invited them to come in and have a chat with me. I also went on to say, Mr. Speaker, because there has been a level of politics added to this, and I said to the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: – the two ladies involved in this group, I said, how about yourselves and myself meet? We will have a very frank discussion. I want to be able to learn from you folks, hear from you of what your concerns are, but we do not need to have this shrouded in politics. That is of course what the member across the way is trying to do.

Just to reiterate, on April 15 I sent an email. I have not heard back yet, but I am more than willing to meet with these individuals and discuss their important concerns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister, I am very well aware of that email, and I actually spoke to them today.

Mr. Speaker, the Families Alliance tells me that the minister will only meet with them if they come to St. John's. He is not prepared to go to Marystown. If the minister had a fire truck to announce, he would have no problem showing up in Marystown. These people are suffering financial hardship. Travelling to St. John's is a challenge.

So I ask the minister: Will you reconsider this heartless stance and go and meet with these grieving families?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I was quite clear – first off, I should say, if the member was aware I had that email, I do not know why we are wasting time asking the question if he was aware of that information. Again, I sent it out –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: If I can finish, please, Mr. Speaker.

I sent the information out April 15. I was very clear, and I said the House of Assembly is open during the week. I am in St. John's. I would be more than happy to meet with you. I would work within your schedules. I would meet with you in the morning. I would meet with you within –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. S. COLLINS: If I can finish, please.

I would meet with you in the afternoon; I would meet with you in the evening. Any time that works for you – I understand you have to travel in – I would meet with you. Of course, I am in my district on the weekends.

So I sent that out. I have had no response whatsoever. If the group feels it is necessary to respond to me and propose a different time, perhaps after the House closes, sometime later in the summer, I would be more than willing to go to Marystown.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, the minister yesterday stated with confidence that there are 5,500 jobs in the forest sector, yet government's own 2008 Forest Sector Strategy states total direct employment at two paper mills and all sawmilling activity was 2,400 people.

Given that a paper mill closed in 2009, sawmills sit idle, and no new development, only job losses, will the Minister of Forestry admit his own government numbers have been wrong for the last six years?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, the numbers that I gave yesterday – as I went back with the department officials yesterday and last evening and confirmed the numbers that I said here in the House of Assembly were accurate, and I have no problem tabling this document which verifies the numbers that the member is asking for.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, government's own forestry strategy states indirect employment for all other industries increase total – I repeat – total employment to approximately 3,000. For six years government has been selling a fairy tale of forestry jobs and industry growth.

I look forward to getting that tabled document, but I want the minister to confirm in this House that this number he has tabled is less than 5,500. Will the minister admit that forestry has not been the focus and that the job numbers are just a fantasy?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, again, I will reiterate what I just said, but I had the opportunity on an airplane two weeks ago to sit with the hon. member and we had a great discussion flying back from Ottawa because of another meeting. We had a great conversation about the potential in forestry and fisheries in the Province.

Mr. Speaker, again, I will table this information as soon as I sit down, which verifies the numbers I said in the House yesterday.

Thank you, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, over five years ago government commissioned a report on fish harvesters not permitted to sell their products directly to retailers or consumers. Our office went to ATIPPA twice for this report, and finally government was forced to release it.

Not to pressure you, Mr. Minister, after all it has only been five years, but when does government intend to act upon this report?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, the fishery in the Province is extremely important to all regions of the Province. We have advocated to better markets for our cod fish and other fish products, and worked with the people of 3Ps. Last year we opened up fish markets to outside buyers coming into the Province. As we return to a groundfish fishery and cod fish in the Province, Mr. Speaker, we will advance the fishery in the Province and continue to do so.

Thank you.

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

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, I cannot really agree with the minister on that. After all, I have fish harvesters over in 3Ps who leave millions of pounds of fish in the water every year for the last three years.

Mr. Speaker, the report recommends allowing people and restaurants to buy certain seafood directly from fishermen at limited amounts.

I ask the minister: Why are you allowing this report to collect dust? Why are you standing in the way of helping to diversify our fishery and our tourism industries?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I have had a very close look at that report and I had some good conversation with my colleagues in the House and former Ministers of Fisheries. I have also had conversations with industry folk and tourism folk in the Province, and I have given it some great consideration.

When we are ready to advance that file along, I will announce it here in the House and we will look at all impacts of that report and those kinds of decisions will have either on tourism and the small industry in the Province, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do so.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, schools around Newfoundland and Labrador have now been notified of how they are exactly going to be impacted by the teacher cuts that were made in the Budget.

I ask the Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: How many schools are affected by these cuts, and how many individual teachers are being cut from classrooms?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, through the Budget exercise, and I guess the annual exercise as well, the discussion between the Department of Education and the school districts with respect to staffing allocations for the year, this year through the Budget exercise and through the allocation exercise a decision was made to reduce the number of teachers by 77.5 units.

The majority of these will be impacted based on the class cap size. I think there is a small number reduced as a result of declining enrolment. That allocation is made to the districts and then the district will work with individual schools as to what their needs are to ensure that we provide a quality education.

Mr. Speaker, that process has taken place. The exact number – I do not have the exact number yet, as a report back from the board has just taken place over the past couple of weeks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, if the minister is going to be responsible for education he should be more on top of how many schools and how many individual teaching positions are affected.

At small rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, teachers and school staff carry on a variety of responsibilities. A loss of only a portion of a teaching unit has a huge impact on everything from educational outcomes to school safety.

I ask the minister: Why are you penalizing students at small rural schools by cutting into the quality of their education with the latest round of poorly thought out teacher cuts that you know very clearly little about here today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I wish I had more time to be able to talk about my twenty years in the school system. In a rural school, in a small school, and the value of teachers and the work they do and how they work with parents. They are able to work together with all stakeholders to deliver a solid education in this Province.

It does not matter if you are in St. John's, like the member opposite, or if you are in a rural school, the smallest rural school in the Province. We have great teachers. We have a good system; however, we must acknowledge that when there are reductions it does have an impact, no question.

During our allocations we recognized the smaller schools: twenty schools with less than twenty students, ten schools with less than ten. We do have special allocation formulas for these schools, and so the member opposite knows, we did not cut them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, we only have one English language school district; one large district now.

MR. SPEAKER: Time for a very quick question.

MR. KIRBY: I suggest to the minister: How about, Minister, you commit today to tabling the information I asked for? You did not answer the question. Bring some of your twenty years of teaching education experience to bear on that and table the information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, time for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, as acting minister or my twenty years of experience, I will debate and have a conversation or provide information to the House or to the people of the Province. Very valuable education information is available to the public. Whatever I have, I will make it available, Mr. Speaker. If he wants to have a debate about it, we can have the whole afternoon to debate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, government announced increased annual caps on support for dental services and dentures for people with low income, claiming they are making health care decisions focused on improved outcomes for patients wishing to enjoy better oral health.

I ask the Premier: Does government's plan include preventative dental services, such as regular cleanings?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are very pleased to have announced some improvements to the Province's Adult Dental Program. What we have done is increased the cap for adult dental services from \$200 to \$300. We have also increased the cap for dentures from \$750 to \$1,500.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: We have heard concerns over the last couple of years from people involved in using the programs and there has been concerns raised in this very House, Mr. Speaker.

We are always looking at ways to improve the programs, and any suggestions we receive, like the one the member is presenting, will certainly be considered.

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: How does not including preventative services square with his stated goal of spending wisely, getting better value for money, and improved outcomes for patients?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we provide publicly funded access to dental services to over 188,400 children, youth, and adults in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: We have one of the most comprehensive public dental programs anywhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Close to \$16 million is budgeted annually for the Dental Health Plan. At the same though, Mr. Speaker, while it is never good enough for the NDP, we have also as individuals to take some responsibility for our own health and well-being. Prevention is an important part of that as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: I ask the minister: Does not he understand how cleaning teeth is part of oral health?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for the hon. member that cleaning your teeth is a good part of oral health. She is indeed correct. I can also confirm that we have a universal Children's Dental Health Program that is indeed preventative and focused on prevention where it matters most.

So yes, it is important for people to take care of their teeth. That is why we have one of the best dental programs in the country, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, today I got a call from constituents living in a boarding house. Their electricity has been cut off because the landlord has not paid the bill. These are folks with barely enough money to live on. All their food will spoil. They said trying to deal with Residential Tenancies is like spitting in a hurricane.

I ask the minister: Where is the new Residential Tenancies Act and its recommendations? It has

been almost three years. What could possibly be taking so long?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do recognize that the act is in need of updating. It was brought in, Mr. Speaker, in 2000, I believe. The act right now serves the residents of the Province very well, landlords and tenants. There are mechanisms for dispute resolution built right into that act.

Mr. Speaker, the people at Residential Tenancies are very effective and things happen very quickly over there. If they contact Residential Tenancies, there are people there to help your constituents in question. There are ways to deal with these situations right now within the existing act.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I went to the consultations for the Residential Tenancies Act and there were huge, huge, huge problems identified by people who took the time to testify. That was three years ago. What could possibly have taken so long?

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Will he instruct Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to stop the sale of all housing, land, and assets until a comprehensive housing strategy is developed in consultation with municipalities, community advisory boards, housing advocates, community groups, and his own interdepartmental housing advisory committee, and the recommendations of the OCR report?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador has time for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, in 1998, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, directed by the Liberal government at the time, was directed to take assets and sell these assets and monetize them – assets that were not being used for housing – and to put that money back into the coffers of government to help those that are most in need, and it was a wise decision.

Mr. Speaker, we have no issues with that whatsoever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: So the assets that we are talking about with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing that they have, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: – in their stock, are not housing assets or other assets that we are divesting of, and we are going to divest of that, put the money back into general revenue, and help the people of the Province that need help the most.

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.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to section 49(2) of the Financial Administration Act, I wish to table the attached list of temporary loans that were raised under Section 48 of the act since the last report in the House on April 3, 2014. In addition, Mr.

Speaker, pursuant to section 55(3) of the Financial Administration Act, I wish to report that there was one guaranteed loan paid out by the Province since the last report in April 3, 2014. Finally, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 55.1(2) of the act, I wish to report that there had been no guaranteed debt of a Crown corporation or agency assumed by the Province since the April 3, 2014 report.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 5 of the Local Authority Guarantee Act, 2005, I wish to table the annual report of the loan guarantees provided to local governments to enable them to arrange interim financing for capital projects.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: I am pleased to report that there are no new loan guarantees on behalf of local governments during the fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, the last report under this act was tabled on April 3, 2014, and included guarantees issued up to and including March 31, 2014. This report covers the period from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the Financial Administration Act, I am tabling three Orders-in-Council relating to funding precommitments for the 2016-2017 to the 2017-2018 fiscal years.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It now being 3:00 p.m. we go to the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Does the minister have leave first to table a document?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave.

The minister has leave to table a document.

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, in response to a question yesterday from the Member for The

Straits – White Bay North, I table this document entitled Forest Industry Employment and Sector Value for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: We will now go to the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East to begin debate on his private member's motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great pleasure to rise in the House today to do my first private member's motion. I have spoken on other people's private member's motions, but this will be the first one that I have put forward in the House. It is a very good honour to rise to present this motion, Mr. Speaker.

Before I get into the motion, I just want to read the motion into the record of the House so that people will know what we are debating here today. People in the House, of course, have it on their Order Paper, but I just want to read the motion into the record so that we know what we are debating here.

Mr. Speaker, the motion is: WHEREAS the government has made many expensive mistakes which have cost the taxpayers of this Province millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS the government has not provided leadership in establishing proper processes and management practices that would result in the prudent expenditure of tax dollars;

BE IT RESOLVED that this House of Assembly condemns the current government's wasteful inept mismanagement of taxpayers' money.

That is the motion that we are debating today. Mr. Speaker, it is a private member's motion and motions are different from bills. We go back and forth every Wednesday, people bring forward motions. The motions that we have in this House are really non-binding. It is really an

opportunity to have an issue discussed, Mr. Speaker.

In other Legislatures they have opportunities to debate private members' bills. People can bring forward private members' bills and have them debated. So, it is an opportunity for government members and Opposition members to have a more substantive sort of input into the operations of government.

These motions that we have, and we go back and forth, one week it is the government, one week it is the Opposition. These motions are basically an opportunity to have an issue debated, to have a discussion. To have a debate about issues that we think are important.

The issue I am dealing with today is an important issue I think. It is about government waste. Basically, it is about: How do we spend taxpayers' money? What controls do we have?

It really goes to the basic principle of government. It goes back to the idea – the whole concept of government is based on that people are willing to come together and organize themselves in a way that they can make their lives better. They contribute a certain amount of money to the operation of government because they believe having a government really makes their lives better. It provides them with services they need that can make their lives better.

Mr. Speaker, this whole concept of government and taxation really begins to fall apart and really begins to erode when governments do not spend taxpayers' dollars in a responsible manner; when they spent it in ways that do not really get a benefit for the people who paid the taxes. That is the very important issue I want to talk about today and I want to have debated here today, and that is why I am bringing it forward.

I think it is timely, as well, because we are really in the middle of the Budget process in this House, this month and the next few weeks. We are really in the period when we are focused on the Budget and spending and expenditures in this Province. So it is a timely debate to have here in this House.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, one of the things I want to bring up is when the

government presented its Budget, one of the things they highlighted was eight principles. The first principle was, "We Will Cultivate a Culture of Cost Management." That was the first principle the Minister of Finance laid out in his Budget Speech. The idea of cultivating a culture of cost management.

At first when I read that in the Budget Speech I said, well, that is a noble sort of ambition. That is a wonderful thing to do, really, to cultivate a culture of cost management. That sort of fits with the basic principles, but then I sort of thought, well, this government has been around for twelve years, Mr. Speaker. They have been in power for twelve years, and they are characterizing this as a new approach after being in government for twelve years?

It is somewhat concerning that they would put forward this as a new initiative. I guess the question people have to ask is, why haven't they been doing this all along? It is something that you would assume a government would have done all along, cultivate a culture of cost management. Mr. Speaker, it seems that was not the case, because they presented it as a new initiative. I guess it sort of fits the political theme now, whereas maybe in the past it did not.

It sort of rings to me the old saying: the horse is gone, maybe we should close the door. It is a little bit concerning that it took twelve years to come to this realization. I think we really have to question, because of the nature of this commitment, the nature of this principle and the way it is presented, I think we really have to question is this government's commitment to that principle.

The other thing is they are saying they are going to get an outside consultant to come in and have a look at the cost expenditure in the Province and how we can contain it. They are going to hire an outside consultant. Mr. Speaker, outside consultants serve a purpose. They often provide a new set of eyes or they bring some expertise they have developed in other areas to government, and sometimes they bring in expertise that is not there in government. Sometimes external consultants are valuable, but I think we really have to question – it becomes problematic when you have an overdependence upon consultants.

When you look at consultants and this government, Mr. Speaker, you have to ask, how much does this government spend on consultants? Does anyone have any idea how much this government spends on consultants?

MR. HILLIER: Do you know, Scotty?

MR. REID: I think I have a figure here, yes. I am just wondering if anyone else knows.

MR. HILLIER: I bet you it is low.

MR. REID: Is it \$10 million a year?

MR. HILLIER: No, it is more than that.

MR. REID: Would it be \$20 million?

MR. HILLIER: The Auditor General knows.

MR. REID: Okay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Higher.

MR. REID: In 2013, the latest year that I have figures for, it was \$85 million. Mr. Speaker, \$85 million on consultants.

Well, \$85 million on consultants, Mr. Speaker. That was more than we spent on roads, more than we spent on road works in this Province.

MR. HILLIER: More than we spent on seniors.

MR. REID: More than we spent on seniors, as the Member for CBS says, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: More than we spent on Labrador ferries.

MR. REID: More than we spent on Labrador ferries, Mr. Speaker.

More than we will spend on implementing full-year kindergarten, Mr. Speaker. It was more than we will spend on the Home Heating Rebate Program. It is more than we will spend on housing this year. It is an enormous figure when you think about it – \$85 million in consultants.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat ironic that the first job of any external consultants might be to look at the expenditure that we have on

consultants. It is sort of ironic. The first job of the outside consultant will be to look at the expenditure on consultants.

Mr. Speaker, when we ask questions about what things are happening in the House, or things are not happening in government, one of the things the government comes back at us with is, well, what a slap in the face to public servants and people who work in this Province and do their best. Well, what does it say when we have to hire so many consultants? What is the message to the senior management that were selected by this government? What is the message to them when we have to hire so many outside consultants? Mr. Speaker, what is the message to them?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about an external consultant that we already have. We already have an external consultant in place. We already have one in place. The external consultant is called the AG, the Auditor General. We already have an external consultant.

AN HON. MEMBER: We bring him in occasionally.

MR. REID: Every year, every year –

AN HON. MEMBER: Not every department, though.

MR. REID: He looks at different departments every year, but every year he does a report and makes recommendations, Mr. Speaker. So they already have an external consultant. That is already built into the government process.

Mr. Speaker, the question is: Has this government been listening to the recommendations made by the Auditor General? Have they been implementing the cost-saving recommendations that the AG has been making over the years? No, they have not. That is the problem and that is another reason why you have to question their commitment to this idea of cost containment, cultivating a culture of cost containment.

Another reason I think you have to question this idea of cultivating a culture of cost containment, I think you need look no further than the Budget package itself. You do not need to look any

farther than the Budget package itself, Mr. Speaker, to see that government really is not committed to cost containment.

You look at the Budget package each year, you usually have the Budget Speech, you have The Economy which outlines things that are happening in the economy, and you have the line by line Estimates that give you the details in the department, and you have the Highlights document which sort of highlights certain points. Until last year you used to have the detail salary estimates. I am not sure what has happened with the detail salary estimates this year. I am not sure if they are online this year. We will have to have a look at that, but there is a new document there this year. The new document is called *Solid Investments in Provincial Infrastructure*.

It is a new document. It is forty pages. It is a very glossy document, and really it outlines infrastructure investments over the last few years. Really, I think that is a campaign document, but I do not think the PC Party is paying for it, Mr. Speaker.

That is another reason why you have to question how committed this government is to containing cost and containing waste when in their very Budget package they are making wasteful expenditures based on political expedience. You have to question their commitment to controlling waste when they do not even get out of the gate, Mr. Speaker. In the whole Budget package, it is not internally consistent. The message does not match the reality of what they have been doing. You have to question how committed they are to cost containment.

I only have a minute or so left here in my first round, but another issue that makes you question their commitment is the amount of money being spent on government advertising now, Mr. Speaker. Nalcor – pretty well every department is out there spending money on advertising of one kind or another. What the government would have us believe is that it is very difficult fiscal times. They are out there spending taxpayers' dollars to promote themselves, basically, in a lot of cases.

A lot of other provinces have legislation which restricts government advertising. This Province does not. It is left to the good judgment of the

people who are in government and how an Opposition can hold them to account. This government has failed that test as well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to showing that they really want to contain waste in government.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up. I will have a few more minutes at the end to provide some concluding comments. I look forward to what the other members have to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a delight today to get up and respond to the private member's motion. The Member for St. George's – Stephenville East laid out what a private member's motion is, the value of it, and the value of the debate we have in the House around private member's motions. So he wanted to enlighten people, provide some information, and that is important.

It is also important when you participate in the debate and you make your comments and you contribute to the debate, it is intended to inform and to enlighten, but it is also intended to be accurate. It is intended to be accurate, I say, Mr. Speaker.

I want to comment on a couple of things that the member opposite has just introduced to the House. For example, he talks about spending \$85 million on consultants. If you left that on its face, you would think that this was \$85 million that government spent to bring people in from the outside to provide advice on day-to-day management decisions. The member is referring to a document that they would have received as a result of an ATIPP request.

What he did not share with the House and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador was a breakdown in that \$85 million, I say, Mr. Speaker, because in that \$85 million, let's think about what is in there. Embedded in that \$85

million are fees that would have been paid for legal counsel. Government is involved many times in getting advice from outside legal counsel. We need to buy those legal services. That is consulting fees. He failed to raise that issue. That is part of that \$85 million.

The other thing he failed to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, was that embedded in that \$85 million, the biggest portion of that \$85 million – in fact, I am not sure what the exact percentage is, but it is well in excess of half of it – is based on our significant investment in infrastructure that he alluded to in his comments as well, because the Budget document this year provided an overview of our fiscal plan, our capital investment plan. When he held up the book and made a reference to it, he did not bring your attention to the last part of it which starts on page 36, which talks about the investment that we are proposing – this is a part of the Budget forecast. Budgets are about capital expenditures. Budgets are about current expenditures. What he failed to realize is that in this document there is a layout of the money we are going to spend on schools, money we are going to spend on health care, money we are going to spend on transportation infrastructure.

Every time we build a school, an architect has to design it. We need an engineer to manage the project for us. We need someone with the necessary architectural and engineering skills to build those schools and to build those hospitals. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? That is embedded in that \$85 million. Fees normally would be in the range of 6 per cent, 7 per cent, or 8 per cent of the total construction cost. So just think about it for a moment. Every year we spend \$700 million or \$800 million on infrastructure, building roads, building schools, building hospitals, building health clinics. Every time we do it, we have to hire an architect and we have to hire an engineer. That is embedded in that \$85 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can give up spending money on capital. The \$6 billion that we have spent over the last ten years, we could have said no, we are not going to do that because we do not want to pay engineering fees. How ridiculous and how stupid would that be? If you are going to have an aggressive infrastructure program and spend \$6 billion over ten years, you

are going to pay consulting fees. It is called design. It is called architectural fees. It is called engineering fees. It is a normal course of doing business.

Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat disingenuous to stand in the House to suggest that \$85 million was wasted on frivolous advice that you got from consultants who came in to tell you how to run the day-to-day operations of government. When he stood and repeated that number, he had in front of him a list of all of those items. He had in front of him, by category, what areas the money was spent. In fact, he had in front of him what departments spent what money. That detail was provided to him by my department, or one of his officials, or one of his speech writers, or the person who maybe even wrote his notes for him for today. They had that in front of him when he, in fact, stood.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make sure the people in the public and the people in this House were fully aware of what that \$85 million represents, why it is spent, and how we get that kind of number. I say, Mr. Speaker, we do not apologize at all when we go out and spend that kind of money on infrastructure and needing to hire architects to help us do that piece.

I just wanted to make sure that we are clear. That \$85 million that he talks about, he seems to suggest it was a waste of money, but when you go down through it, look at how we have, in fact, spent that money and what value we got for that, Mr. Speaker.

To suggest that the Auditor General is a consultant – the Auditor General is not a consultant, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General provides very valuable work. He provides very valuable assessments, provides very valuable feedback to government. I do not categorize him as a consultant, and I doubt very much if the Auditor General himself would view himself as a consultant.

Quite the contrary, he is acting on behalf of this House. He is an independent Officer of this House. He does his work independent of any department of government, reports directly to this Chamber, to this House of Assembly, and then by extension to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. He is not engaged

as a consultant to give advice. He does his own work and provides information. He is independent of any department of government but he reports directly to the House. I just want to make sure people understand clearly the use of the language consultants and what we do with them.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we are big people. We acknowledge we need to reach out sometimes to engage people to provide advice and provide direction to us. We do not sit on this side of the House, even though we have the majority of the people who sit in this House, we do not stand here and believe we have all of the answers to everything that goes on in the world. We do not stand here and think we are absolutely right on every single issue that arises. We are big enough, Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge there will be times there will be issues that arise that we need to seek out the best expertise that is available.

It is no offence to anybody in the public service, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we have said in this House many times – in fact, during this Budget debate in recent weeks I have said, the Premier has said on any number of times that we respect the public service of this Province. That is why we are upfront with them. That is why we said that over the course of the next five years here is our plan for how we will readjust the size of the public service. We have not said secretly that we are going to wait until we get another set of facts in front of us and then we were going to decide what departments we were going to eliminate. We did not say that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: We did not say that at all. We respect the public service and the work they do but everybody recognizes, regardless of where you are, whether you are in the public service or whether you are in the private sector, whether you are in – it does not matter what industry you are in. There will be times when you will look at what you need before you, what the issues are before you, and you will need to make a decision. We have talented expertise in-house but we need to bring someone in who has a very specialized set of skills to help us work through a given circumstance we have, and that

is the circumstance we find ourselves in today, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at – and I am delighted the member opposite read the Budget documents because we have received some compliments on this Budget document. It is a comprehensive plan. It lays out a five-year fiscal framework. Never before, Mr. Speaker, never before – and the reason the member opposite is so astounded by it is because the Liberals never ever built a five year budget.

This House of Assembly has never seen a document like this, Mr. Speaker, where you lay out a five-year plan. You know year by year by year for five full years. The other significant thing which the Liberals never ever did, they never ever developed targets. They never said here are performance measures, you can judge us on our performance measures.

We are going to come to this House twice a year. We are going to come in the fall with an update and we are going to give you a progress report. We are going to come in the spring or late winter every year and we are going to give you a Budget, another update, and we are going to be judged. We have performance measures here, Mr. Speaker, that we will be judged on our performance.

The other reason I suspect he is not very happy with the Budget document itself is because we have provided a forecast for the future but we have also looked at some history. If you look at some of the history, it dates you back to about ten years of Liberal reign. If you look at all these performance indicators, just look at all these performance indicators, Mr. Speaker, and look at the period when the Liberals were in power versus the last ten years. Just look at the comparison. Look at the comparison, Mr. Speaker.

As an Administration, we have outperformed the Liberal Administration that were here the ten years before that on any of those performance measures. That is why the member is astounded by it. Never before has he seen in this House a government that introduces a five-year plan, a detailed five-year plan, never before has he seen performance indicators where we are going to be

measuring our success in working towards these budget targets.

So I say, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that he read it. I am delighted he read it because we have received many compliments on it. Never before, as he has pointed out, it never happened before. The reason it never happened before is because we believe with a new leadership – Premier Davis and a new leadership, a new vision for the future, a new approach to governance. We lay out so everybody can see. There is nothing secretive here. We have a plan, we have a vision, and we have a clear understanding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, when you start talking about fiscal management, and to suggest there has been something wrong that has happened in the last ten or twelve years, just look at where we are. Look at those performance indicators. Look at how we have reduced net debt during that period. Look at how we have made significant investments in infrastructure, \$6 billion.

Just drive around the Province today and look at new schools. The Member for The Straits – White Bay North, look at the South Coast of Labrador. The member stands in this House every day and talks about how the South Coast of Labrador is left out. You drive up that coast and what do you see? Two new schools. Drive up the Northern Peninsula, what do you see? New schools as you drive up the Northern Peninsula. That kind of strategic investment, Mr. Speaker, in key infrastructure in this Province is important for the people who live in those regions. We made those decisions.

So if you want to stand in this House today and you want to go to any one of these communities – go to a community that had a new school built in the last ten years and say, do you know something, they should not have built that. That is mismanagement. You did not deserve that new school. We should have saved that money. We should have reduced the debt. Is that what they are suggesting, Mr. Speaker?

Look at poverty reduction, just one issue. I could go on for hours talking about the money

we have spent in the last ten years, the programs we have enhanced, and the investments we have made to position this Province to be better served today than we would have been had we not done it. Just look at one issue, Mr. Speaker, something that is dear to all of us as a society, as a people, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We value and respect our neighbours. We care for them. We are nurturing people, caring people.

When we came to government we had the highest rates of poverty in the entire country. It was embarrassing, Mr. Speaker. As a Newfoundlander and Labradorian it was embarrassing to say that we had the highest rate of poverty in the entire country.

We said we are going to do something about it. It was not good enough to just say, boy, that is terrible, that should not be. We are going to do something about it; we are going to fix it. So we set out on a path, Mr. Speaker, and we have stayed focused. We set out on a path, developed a strategy, a Poverty Reduction Strategy. In fact, we had people visiting from around the country wanting to mimic what we had done here, it was such a well-laid-out plan.

We started making investments year over year over year. Regardless of what other priorities came up, what other issues surfaced, we were diligent, Mr. Speaker, we were focused, and we were on a mission. Just look at what has happened today. Look at the poverty rates today versus where they were back in 2003 and 2004. There are only about half the number of people today on Income Support as there was back in 2004-2005 – just one indicator, Mr. Speaker.

Look at what we have done with providing some support to young families. Look at what we have done in reducing income tax for people with incomes less than \$18,000. This year, Mr. Speaker, just think about this, if you are a single individual making just a little shy of \$19,000 a year, you pay no personal income tax to Newfoundland and Labrador. If you are a family and your income is just a little over \$30,000 a year, you pay no personal income tax to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what we have done. It is just one of the many things that we have done to make sure that we eradicate poverty in this Province.

Many years ago – you only have to go back, what, twelve years ago? Every September, families sending kids back to school, what would they have to do? Buy books, supplies, all kinds of fees. When they walked through the door the first day, the principal was there with the hand out, you need a fee for this, the fee for that, the fee for something else.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? That was contributing to the poverty that existed in this Province. We said that cannot happen; we have to fix that. That was embedded then in our Poverty Reduction Strategy. We took an eraser to every single fee in schools, took them all out, and eliminated them. Today, we do not have any fees in our schools in this Province. We provide free textbooks to the students of the Province in our K-12 system.

So just think about that, Mr. Speaker, the strategic investments we have made in the future of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Our young people, the people who are Grades 4 and 5 and 6, people starting out in life, and we have made a huge difference. So any man who stands in this House and says this has been mismanagement of fiscal resources –

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): Order, please!

I remind the minister his time has expired.

MR. WISEMAN: – point to something that they would not do. Point to one of these things that they would not do, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just stand for a minute. I heard the minister talk. I tell you one thing we would not have done. When he was Minister of Health with a wink and nod, with Billy Fanning, gave the Centre for Health Information a 300 per cent raise. The Auditor General went in there and said it was shocking that the minister would not put it in writing. That is one thing we would not have done: given a wink and a nod to Billy Fanning, going down and say give them all the

raise, while the civil servants here are going on next to nothing and giving all the bunch down there – that is one thing.

I just find it odd, Mr. Speaker – now, I am not here to criticize the minister, but he is criticizing the Liberals. What platform did he win the election on if it was not a Liberal platform? If you want to talk about disingenuous, he ran on a Liberal platform, went out, got elected on all the Liberal policies, and turned around and say how shocking those Liberals. You want to talk about disingenuous. Oh my, I could not believe it – I could not believe it.

Anyway, the minister just spoke about some things you would not have done. For twelve years –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: The government gets tired, Mr. Speaker, and abuse creeps in – abuse creeps in. I remember Paddy Daly and I was on a talk show and he said: Well, the Liberals did. I said: Yes, and the Liberals got booted out, the same as what should happen with this crowd, booted out. I make no bones about it. Anybody who takes the people of the Province for granted, takes their finances and spends it, in my opinion, in several occasions in wasteful ways – and I will give you some good examples and the minister wanted us to stand up and give you some. I will give you some, Mr. Speaker. I will give you a nice few.

Do I think there have been good things done in the Province? Absolutely. I would never stand in this House and say there has nothing good been done. Absolutely, I would never say that, Mr. Speaker, because there has been, but this is about abuse. This is about ownership now of abuse. This is some type of entitlement that we can go off and do what we like in this Province because we are the governing party.

I will just go through some, Mr. Speaker. I will just go through a few of them that we are going to talk about. Let's talk about the \$25 million or \$30 million because up in Parson's Pond when they wanted to drill a hole, you think they would have did that with their own money. Drilled two

holes up there \$30 million, wannabe Jed Clampetts of the world, tried to find oil. Because it is taxpayers' money, they go up and drill two holes; that is \$30 million.

Think what could happen in this Province with \$30 million. That is just counting drilling the holes, not counting what it cost again to build the roads to the hole, and this is all Nalcor. This is all approved by this government. That is a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, \$30 million. They were dry holes and they were told that. They were informed of that because if any oil company who already did any seismic work in that area, they walked away; but because it is taxpayers' money – just think \$30 million.

How many children could that help? Just think, there would be no increase at Memorial University this year because of that. Just think of how many people in child poverty that this could help out with \$30 million. That is just one.

Just look at Abitibi in the big haste because they wanted to make sure that Abitibi were not going to walk away with our money, Mr. Speaker, and the fatal mistake of the government, the abuse and they would never admit it – over \$200 million liability now in environmental cleanup.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just think about it, just think about what this Province could do with \$200 million. Just think about it. This is what happens when a government gets in and they feel they are entitled to make these decisions without doing due diligence. Just think about it; that is \$230 million. That is just two things in the last number of years, Mr. Speaker. Every one of those members opposite voted for all of this. They all agreed with it. They all stood up and supported this. When you talk about entitlement, you have to think about are you doing what is best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is just two examples.

We spoke to the government. We said: We have to look at this. Mr. Speaker, we were shut down. Oh, no, we are against government. We are not standing with the government. Look at what happens. Any time you stand up and ask a question it is almost like you are against us. You are against the Province. It is either us or

them. That is \$230 million. Just think what the people – ask anybody out there who is listening today: What would you be able to do with \$230 million? Just think about it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to something that I brought up in the Auditor General's report. I know the Member for Humber West is well aware of them. We have Holson Forest Products up in Roddickton when they built a pellet plant. I just want to put this on the record, Mr. Speaker. I did it in Public Accounts and I just want members opposite to know what they voted for. When I asked questions on this, it was you are not for the Northern Peninsula. You are against development. Here is what happened there, Mr. Speaker.

They went up and they put \$10 million into a pellet plant in Roddickton. I asked questions about it after it was done. Guess what? In Public Accounts – it is on the record – I asked them, the officials, show me the markets that you had for the pellets. Do you know what the answer was? We have none. We did not do a market survey. They did not do a market survey and put \$10 million up in Roddickton for a pellet plant and gave the big impression when they went up for the big press release of how we are going to save the Northern Peninsula.

On the second part of that – it is sad because people really believed that government did the work on this. That is \$240 million so far. Mr. Speaker, I asked a further question. You have no market, so you have no place to sell you pellets. Second of all: Where are you going to store your pellets? We do not have a storage facility. I said: Well, how much will that cost? That is \$1 million. I said: Didn't government – no, they said that was all right.

So if you are going to make the pellets, you have no place to sell them, you have no place to store them while you are in production. That is one part of lack of due diligence of \$10 million. Then I said, well, how are you going to ship them there? Well, we had a wharf, but the federal government came in and tore down the wharf. I said, did the provincial government step in and say we need the wharf? Oh, no. So how are you going to get it? How are you going to get the pellets – which you do not have stored, which you do not have in markets, how are you

going to get them to the market? We need another \$4 million to build the wharf. Mr. Speaker, so you call that a waste of money? I call it a waste of money, absolutely a waste of money.

Mr. Speaker, here is the kicker. In the big scheme of government, it is not a big deal, an extra million dollars for Holson Forest Products in Roddickton. When it came back from the federal government, they got the rebate of a million dollars. They went to the provincial government, and they sat here in Public Accounts. I asked a question. I said, what happened to the million dollars? Oh, we gave it back to pay the bills.

The question that I asked was very specific. Can you show me what bills they paid with that million dollars? They said, no. Just ask people, would you ever do that with your public money? If that was your own personal money, Mr. Speaker, would you do that? Would you go to somebody and say, oh, we just paid some bills, here is the money for it. You have to prove that it was done.

Mr. Speaker, that is where entitlement comes in. Just think about that. *Northern Pen*, here is the article, "Roddickton's recycled power plant." Holson Forest Products has this also, they put it out on bid. They did not want it. It was, I think, five megawatts of power. They gave it to Holson for the pellet plant which is never going to operate in Roddickton, not a chance right now, unless what I mentioned earlier happens.

They gave them the generation plant, Mr. Speaker. Get this now, for the pellet plant they gave it to them. Boom, here it is. They would not disclose. They dismantled the plant. Take a guess at what happens, Mr. Speaker. They sold it to a company in Quebec, a green forest company. The company they sold it to in Quebec, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get this: the company would not state how much they paid for it, but on a \$17 million project they saved \$7 million by getting this free gift from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. An asset they gave away for a pellet plant which never existed.

Mr. Speaker, I am up to \$270 million already, and I have not even started yet. Those are just

some of the major things. You wonder when the member brings up about waste in government, this is what happens. This is the entitlement this government feels is their right and their ownership. It is our obligation, as Opposition, to bring this up to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask any person out there in TV land, Mr. Speaker, who are looking at this debate today to tell me: What would you do with \$250 million, \$260 million? What would you do?

I am not even going to get into Muskrat Falls today. I am not going to get into how I feel about Muskrat Falls, millions and billions being poured in of taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker, poured into something. I hear the minister standing up day after day, but we are going to have money coming in from here to eternity. We are, but it is the people of the Province who are paying for it, so you cannot say it is new money. You cannot say the government is making all this money, because we are paying for it. We are paying for it. The prices are going to go up, and guess what? If you want to talk about abuse, Nova Scotia is going to get it at cost price – if you want to talk about abuse, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to get into that today, I am going to speak for my last three or four minutes. Just look at some smaller things. Look at Bill 29 and the cost, \$1.4 million. People in government say, well, that is not a lot of money. To a \$7 billion, \$8 billion Budget, it is not.

I ask the average household person out there, what would you do in your area, or any member, in your district with \$1.4 million that it cost for their mistake? Just any district, pick a district in this Province, water and sewer, roads, upgrades, municipal buildings, schools. What would you do with \$1.4 million? Mr. Speaker, you would do a lot.

When you look at the big scheme and you become tired and you get entitlement, oh, it is only \$1.4 million. It is not a big deal – but it is. When you are out in the communities and you see people without proper drinking water, when you see sewer running into ditches, it is a lot. It is a lot of money. This is why the people are

saying that any government, Mr. Speaker, that all of a sudden becomes entitled, they lose focus of what they were elected for. This is what is happening here.

Mr. Speaker, I can go back, and not everybody was here at the time. I was here. The office in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, the big office. We are setting up an office in Ottawa because we do not have confidence in the MPs. We are taking our fight to Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, that cost \$4 million to \$5 million. We still do not have the full figure on it; \$4 million to \$5 million to have an office.

The funny part about that, Mr. Speaker, the office in Ottawa, I know the members opposite do not even know this, they had someone from another office to come down and collect the mail because there was no one ever in the office, but we were paying rent at the building. We used to hire people to go up to the office. We had seven MPs. We had all the ministers here, yet for some reason we had to go take on Ottawa and we had to spend millions upon millions of dollars to go up to Ottawa to say that we are going to fight for ourselves in Ottawa. They had no one in the office. They had it leased but no one in the office. They had all the equipment in the office. They had no one in the office but we are going to fight for someone in the office, for spite, in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, even when we look at the consolidation of Eastern Health, even the Auditor General, \$4.7 million. I am up to \$280 million now.

Look at the fines in Newfoundland and Labrador. They laid off the collection people. They laid them off. The fines in Newfoundland and Labrador, get this, Mr. Speaker, is \$42 million. I ask any town out there, take the seven largest towns, what could you do with \$42 million? What can the average person do if you split that up around the Province? Just think about that, and they laid off the people who were actually going to go out and collect the fines.

Mr. Speaker, right now, as we speak, we are up to \$360 million. So the next time the member opposite wants to ask me, what would you do differently? I am up now to over \$370 million by the time I am finished with it here.

When you look at the moose detection, that is another fiasco. That cost, again, \$1.5 million to \$2 million. Guess what? I ask any municipality out there, what could you do with that money? Ask any common person who is struggling right now, Mr. Speaker. How can we help out the common folks in this Province with that type of money?

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is coming near. The next time someone opposite wants to challenge me on what would you do different? There is \$380 million right there, Mr. Speaker, of what I would have done different.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It has been an interesting discussion this afternoon. I was amused by the motion that was put forward yesterday by the hon. member who spoke first today. I think there are probably more constructive ways we could utilize Private Members' Day but nonetheless, I congratulate him on his first motion.

As the Finance minister pointed out earlier today, Mr. Speaker, if you are going to participate in debate then it is important to be accurate. It is important to provide real information and not just rhetoric and spin.

We have heard two members of the Opposition today get up and talk about waste. Well, I would like to challenge that. Over the little bit of time I have this afternoon to participate in this debate, I intend to do so, because, Mr. Speaker, our government has been implementing solid plans for the last twelve years. In fact, we have a plan right now to deal with the current fiscal situation, as the Minister of Finance spoke to earlier today. We have clearly set out a five-year fiscal recovery plan and it is very clear. It has been set out very clearly. We have set clear

targets, Mr. Speaker. We have set out benchmarks to measure ourselves against.

This is the first time that any government has laid out such a clear, fiscal plan, but the members opposite do not want to hear that. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve a clear plan, but I can assure you that they will not get it from the folks opposite because we keep asking where is the plan from our detractors, and last week –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: You can hear them gibber-jabbering over there; it is like *The Muppet Show* over there, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: I rest my case, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for your protection.

Last week, the Liberal Opposition said that they were going to unveil a big economic announcement, an economic plan. Then they got everybody together, a couple of folks from St. John's, somebody from outside St. John's, and then the big announcement was that they do not have a plan. They actually were announcing they have a plan to create a plan. If they do have a plan, they are keeping it to themselves, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure that is a position that you can trust. It is not a position that I trust.

The Leader of the Opposition announced I think on Budget day that he would increase borrowing against the future. That was his plan to deal with the fiscal situation, but he did not talk to the Member for Virginia Waters. They did not confer on their positions on Budget day, and maybe it is because they are a team of leaders as the Leader of the Opposition has suggested. The Member for Virginia Waters outlined clearly that she would cut spending, she would cut programs, and she would get rid of public servants. In fact, in a very derogatory way she

referred to one of the offices that I am responsible for and basically said that the entire office is a waste of government resources.

Those, Mr. Speaker, are diametrically opposing views, so which position should you trust? Should you trust the Leader of the Opposition, or should you trust the Finance critic, the Member for Virginia Waters? I am not sure which one of them I believe, and I am not sure which position that I would trust.

Unlike the opposing views that have been articulated by the Leader of the Opposition and his Finance critic, we have a real plan. As the Finance Minister has outlined, that plan is about balance.

It gets more confusing than that, Mr. Speaker, if you try to dig into what they actually stand for or do not stand for. Just yesterday in the House of Assembly, the Member for St. Barbe said, "I think everybody understands that you can control how much you spend one way or the other. You can defer some things. You can cut back some things. You can eliminate some things."

Well, I am glad there is at least one member opposite who understands that sometimes you have to make tough choices throughout a Budget process because his leader and many of the members opposite do not seem to recognize that. In fact on April 30, *The Globe and Mail* reported that the Leader of the Opposition said that he would not cut any programs. He said that he would roll back the HST increases. So if you want to talk about fiscal mismanagement, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about that for a moment.

The Liberal idea seems to be let's avoid tough choices, let's make the popular choices, let's say whatever we think the public wants to hear, let's borrow, let's borrow, let's borrow. Unless you are the Finance critic because the Finance critic does not want to borrow, she wants to gut the public service. It does not make a whole lot of sense to me.

Who knows how high the debt would rise and the deficit would be if the Liberals actually were to take power in this Province. They say they would reduce taxes and fees, thus reducing revenues. They also continually challenge us to

build more schools and bigger schools. We cannot pave roads fast enough for their liking, Mr. Speaker, and they ask us to wave our magic wand and make new health care facilities appear and at the same time they want us to do all that no matter what the cost is.

They do not like our partnership for long-term care, a partnership that will provide services, vital services in a fiscally responsible way, but they do advocate spend, spend, spend – well, with one exception, and this is all we hear from the members opposite; but at least the Member for St. Barbe recognized yesterday in this House that sometimes you do have to cut. So maybe the team of leaders should get together and have a chat about their fiscal policy.

Also yesterday in this very House, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. John's North joined in and he said: "The Budget this year should have been called lost opportunity and misplaced priorities." Misplaced priorities – I ask the members opposite, which priorities of ours are misplaced? Because the priorities of our government and the priorities of our Premier were actually quite clear going into this Budget process. That is more than we can say about the Leader of the Opposition and we are still trying to figure out what his priorities are. We were not at the dinner in Toronto, so we could not really get to hear it first-hand.

The priorities of our Premier, though, and the priorities of our government were to help the economy be as strong as possible, to protect the jobs of public servants –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: There they go again, Mr. Speaker. There they go again. I am glad they are entertained or amused or whatever is going on over in that back row.

Our plan was to protect the jobs of public servants, to prevent mass layoffs – like we saw in the 1990s – which would also assist the economy. We also committed to providing the best health care and access to health care possible for our residents, and we are going to continue to develop infrastructure where it is needed most. Our Premier's priority was clearly to balance fiscal concerns and social concerns.

So I ask the members opposite: Are these the misplaced priorities that you refer to? Are these misplaced priorities? Because it seems like these are the priorities of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

On May 4 in this House of Assembly, the Member for Virginia Waters said that “For any government, including a Liberal government, attrition will help with reducing the cost of government without negatively impacting the economy” So, it is good to see some acknowledgement that our attrition plan may very well be the right move.

The Leader of the Opposition a couple of years ago – not even a couple of years ago – said, you have to put sustainable practices in place in your expenditures. What we have done here in the last few years – I am not here to argue that we have to have less wages, but we do need less people. So, he is acknowledging, like the Member for Virginia Waters not that long ago, that we should reduce the public service. That is why we are using attrition. The approach that seems to be talked about across the way, if we could get a clear answer, is layoffs, which is not something that we support, Mr. Speaker.

Just before that, the Leader of the Opposition – who was not the leader at the time, I do not believe; maybe he was – he said, this is the third term for government, and there was no question that back in 2003 there was significant debt within the Province. So, there was some acknowledgement. He said – and these were his words – we had social debt, we had infrastructure debt, and of course we had financial debt. There just really was not a lot of money to go around.

So, the Liberals asked where our money went. I will tell you where the money went, Mr. Speaker; it went to fix those issues that the Leader of the Opposition has acknowledged himself. We fixed social debt, we have addressed infrastructure debt, and we have addressed financial debt. We have made great progress, Mr. Speaker.

We hear members opposite get up day after day saying that we have mismanaged the Province’s finances. They say we have wasted money –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: – and apparently it is a joke to the crowd in the back row over there, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think it is actually very serious, because they are accusing government of wasting money and to the members opposite – if they could pay attention for a few minutes – I asked them: Are all the bridges we have built wasteful? Are the schools we have built and renovated wasteful? Are the roads we have paved the waste that they are talking about?

They tell us about all this waste, but they cannot tell us, not one of them over there, Mr. Speaker, can tell us what they would do differently, except, as we heard last week, now they have a plan to come up with a plan someday, perhaps by September, I believe.

If you look at the Budget Highlights document on page 4 you will see where over \$6.6 billion has been – and you will see how it has wisely been invested since 2004. It has gone into infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, infrastructure that will keep people safe, allow them to get from point A to point B, and allow them to access government programs and services. I ask the members opposite again: Is that the waste that they are talking about? Is that the waste that they would have cut?

The infrastructure highlights in this Budget include \$1.89 billion for roads and buildings, \$1.6 billion for education infrastructure, \$1.5 billion in health care infrastructure, and \$1.27 billion for municipal infrastructure. So we have presented all that information about our plan and our accomplishments. I would like to know is that all waste? Is that what the members opposite consider waste?

Are they telling the communities of this Province that they should not have gotten their recreation complexes? Are they telling parents that their children should be in old mouldy schools that were neglected by the previous Administration? I certainly hope not, Mr. Speaker – I certainly hope not.

I will stand on our record and members of this government will stand on our record as well.

When we compare the Liberal financial record of the past to the Tory record of the past decade, we can see that we truly are the best financial managers because we balance social needs, the people's needs. We balance –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: They do not want to hear it; they laugh and joke. We want to balance social needs, the needs of people, with financial concerns. We aim to spend money wisely all the time and we cannot say the same for previous Administrations. I will not focus on some of the mismanagement that went on prior to our Administration because it is a long time ago, and I recognize that just about all members except one were not part of that Administration.

Let's talk about some economic measures. Page 3 of the Budget Highlights document shows several fiscal performance indicators. When we look at net debt as a percentage of GDP we see that it was much, much higher under Liberal Administrations, approximately 60 per cent higher. The net debt as a percentage of GDP was incredibly high until 2004 when it started to decrease because of actions that we have taken, Mr. Speaker.

That metric then dropped to about 25 per cent in 2009 and it is still, Mr. Speaker, at 25 per cent. So it will increase very slightly in the next couple of years due to low oil prices. I hear members opposite shouting about oil. It is still much lower than what it was in the past.

When you look at debt expenses and percentage of gross revenue, you will see the same thing. From 1995 to 2001, the Liberal debt expense was 20 per cent to 25 per cent and higher. Thanks to our wise financial planning the debt expense is now less than 15 per cent and is forecasted to continue to be less than 15 per cent. Those are just a couple of metrics. If I was not running out of time, I could give you more examples.

We can also compare the borrowing of Liberals in previous Administrations to our fiscal plans today. If you at page 6 of the Budget highlights, "Cumulative borrowing totalled \$6.78 billion over the 1987-88 to 2003-04 period, averaging \$399 million per year. If that level of borrowing

has continued, borrowing would have totalled \$4.4 billion over the 2004-05 to 2014-15 period. However, in reality, borrowing over that time frame ... was much lower" So what that means is that we fixed a lot of the issues that have haunted us in the past.

I only have a minute left so I want to talk about health care spending, which I assume the folks opposite would categorize as wasteful as well. It has been one of our top priorities and it has been one of the biggest line items in the Budget. So maybe this is the waste the Opposition is talking about, but I do not think the people in Newfoundland and Labrador would call it waste. There is nobody on this side of the House who would call it waste.

In a Province of just over 500,000 people we have fifteen hospitals. We have twenty-three community health centres. We have 119 community clinics. We have twenty-three long-term care facilities. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We are going to build even more.

So which of those facilities, which of those hospitals, which of those community health centres, which of those clinics, which of those long-term care facilities do the members opposite consider to be waste? Because they are the same folks who will stand in this House day after day and advocate that we should be spending more money and doing more and more in all kinds of different areas. Whether you are talking municipal infrastructure or education, or health or whatever the case may be.

What is irresponsible is the kind of suggestions that have been made here today that some of these investments are wasteful. That is not something I will stand for, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the minister his time has expired.

MR. KENT: Members on this side of the House will not stand for it either.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

Usually I say I am happy to stand and speak in this debate, but I have to say I find the motion that we are dealing with today an appalling waste of this House's time when there are so many more important topics we could be debating.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: I also find it rather ironic coming as it does from a party that has a history of mismanagement in this Province. So they cannot talk about this one over here. They are both in the pot together.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Just last week, the old Holyrood rubber boot factory was demolished, sixty years after it closed. In the 1950s the Liberal government spearheaded an industrialization strategy which cost the people of this Province a fortune and failed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: This closing of the boot factory really does seem the perfect metaphor for this afternoon's Liberal private member's motion. While they stand and try to score political points here today claiming they are better managers of the Province's money, their long political legacies say otherwise, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS MICHAEL: We are here today in a private member's motion. A private member's motion can be meaningful and accomplish things, like the day we stood here when the Member for St. John's Centre brought the private member's motion about the all-party committee on mental health. The Committee was formed and is now working and they are going around and hearing the people in this Province tell us what their concerns are. That is the kind of thing we should be discussing, Mr. Speaker.

Resolutions on improved child care or resolutions on primary health care, let's look at the size of all of those issues, but instead here we are today wasting time on blatant partisanship, Mr. Speaker.

A little over a year ago the NDP caucus presented a motion to raise the minimum wage. We were able to talk about why minimum wage is important, able to talk about how we take care of people who are working on poverty wages, Mr. Speaker. That motion was a recommendation based on the government's own committee reviewing minimum wage, a motion that could have helped many people in our Province living in poverty and was rejected by both of these parties here in this House.

Perhaps the aforementioned boot factory, which made defective boots no one wanted, is ancient history, but it is just one of a series of ill-thought-out Liberal economic initiatives which cost the people of this Province dearly.

Then we had the things they did together and mismanaged. The Liberals started the linerboard mill in Stephenville and that was a disaster of epic economic portions in the early 1970s.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: It was the Tories that continued it, Mr. Speaker, the two of them together. The Newfoundland governments, both of them, invested over \$300 million, including construction costs and erratic infusions of money; the financial losses were abysmal. The project was such a white elephant that Moody's,

the credit rating agency, cited it as a factor in Newfoundland's low credit rating at the time.

The disastrous Upper Churchill contract, money lost in the signing and that was lost by the Liberals and money lost since, all the money that the Tories have been putting into trying to get out of the contract that the Liberals signed, so mismanagement on both sides, Mr. Speaker.

I could go on, but I do believe we are wasting time talking about this as they stand here and try to show how each other mismanages. They are posturing, trying to figure out who is the better manager. They have the gall, and I have heard both sides say it, that they are better on fiscal matters than the NDP. Well they certainly have not proven they are better than anybody.

Given the outrageous fiscal history of both of these parties, this would be funny if it were not so galling and tragic to the people of this Province who have borne the burden of this mismanagement. I want to see it come to an end, but I do not see people in this House on either side who are the ones to do that, Mr. Speaker. I am going to sit down now because I think it is a waste of time and I am not going to waste any more time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MR. HEDDERSON: I say, Mr. Speaker, I have to pick up where the Leader of the Third Party left off. Yesterday I got up too soon. This time I am up too early again.

I say, Mr. Speaker, it is a great opportunity for me to get on my feet today and speak on a private member's motion brought forward by the member opposite, and to also look at the opportunity to talk about the way we have fiscally managed this Province. Really, I have been there since 2003. I have seen the good, the bad, and some ugly. There is no doubt about that. I do not think there is a government that has come through twelve years that cannot talk a little bit about the ugly.

As we talk about the Budget, it is all about balance. It is all about trying to make sure that we are meeting the needs of the people who put us here. I do not think there is any doubt. I would say on both sides of the House that is a basic principle which we all sit in this House or stand in this House on. This is about –

AN HON. MEMBER: Hedderson, weren't you NDP (inaudible)?

MR. HEDDERSON: What? Oh my God, strike me dead that you would even suggest that I was orange, I say to the member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: I do remember that you were blue and turned red. I will say that I chuckled today when the member sitting next to you for the Bay of Islands, talked about someone crossing for this side of the House from the Liberal's side when he is surrounded by turn colourers. Basically three of them are surrounding him and he has the gall to look over and point at one of ours.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that I will –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HEDDERSON: I digress, Mr. Speaker. I apologize and I will not even pay attention to what is going on the other side –

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MR. HEDDERSON: This is a very important motion that I think we need to shoot down. There is no doubt in my mind. I do agree with the Leader of the Third Party that it is kind of a waste of time. I do not like talking about a waste of time in this House. Any time a member gets up they have something to say, and I hope that it does add to the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, let me get on with the debate. I follow from my colleagues who certainly have made good stead today.

Newfoundland and Labrador as a Province has experienced a decade of substantial growth. The decisions this government is making right now are helping to protect that growth and to lay a foundation for future continued growth.

I do know that the Member for Bay of Islands had sort of a head calculator. I kind of miss the former Member for CBS who had that large calculator. If he were present here now I would ask him to start clicking off. I think that if you are getting up in a debate you should have the information that is necessary and stay away from the rhetoric and trying to persuade people one way or the other. I think we should present the facts of what we have done in this substantial decade of growth. Someone can add it up and tell me at the end what, in all that I have mentioned, would they have not done. That is the important part.

When you talk about doing things, you have to look at what are the indicators that you are doing good, bad, or very poorly, outcomes indicators. Let me talk about some of the indicators. After twelve years, really, of substantial growth, this Province boasts the highest average weekly earnings in our history. Our per-capita household incomes are third highest among the provinces. Our retail sales in this Province are third amongst the provinces.

Per capita investment in Newfoundland and Labrador is second highest among the provinces behind only Alberta. Capital investments have been particularly strong, almost tripling from \$4.2 billion – and listen to this number – to over \$12.2 billion capital investment. The unemployment rate remains one of the lowest levels in forty years.

So if that is mismanagement, what can I say? It has brought us up to some of the top levels of indicators throughout this great country of ours. These significant indicators did not happen by chance or accident. Our government made strategic decisions that allowed Newfoundland and Labrador to prosper over the past decade, and yes, to become the envy of this country on so many fronts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: However – and I know I sound like the Opposition now but – we are not immune from the impacts of a global decline in commodity prices, particularly oil and iron ore, I say to the Member for Labrador West, but we do have a plan. That is the key thing I think we need to get across to the people of this Province. We do not have to plan for a plan; we have a plan to weather the storm and return our Province to surplus in 2021.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, if that is fiscal mismanagement I will eat my hat, how is that?

We have talked a little bit about infrastructure. The infrastructure deficit in 2003 was no man's business – no person's business I should say – because it was quite obvious. We had no trouble whatsoever in that first year laying down an eight-year infrastructure plan. The problem that we had was what we were going to prioritize, because all of them were priorities, our roads, our buildings, and this building itself, et cetera.

We placed great significance on building infrastructure in this Province that we believe will stand the test of time. This building now, as the scaffolds come down, as the shroud comes down, we see a building now that can weather the storms a little bit better than when it was even first built.

When we came into office we were faced with a real infrastructure deficit and had to invest significantly to give Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a solid, reliable infrastructure that they needed. I say, Mr. Speaker, we are still in progress. What we have done over the last ten years, specifically, there is as much to do in the next ten.

We have a plan. We know where we need to go. Infrastructure, if we go forward, will remain a priority as we try to get beyond an infrastructure deficit. Some of the roads that we did twelve years ago, guess what, they need to be done again. That is just the nature of all of this.

Mr. Speaker, we place great significance on infrastructure. Budget 2015, by the way, includes a \$660.8 million infrastructure

program. Is that a bad budget? Are we mismanaging it because we are still continuing to invest where we need to invest? That investment, by the way, not only gets the infrastructure but it also gives us employment. A lot of Newfoundland companies and Labrador companies are involved in that infrastructure and I must say they employ a lot of people.

Now from 2004 to this year – and this is where I will ask someone to do the calculation. From 2004 to right now we have invested \$1.89 billion for road and building construction, \$1.27 billion for municipal infrastructure, \$1.5 billion for health care infrastructure, and \$1.6 billion for education infrastructure. I would ask anyone to go back over every individual project and tell me again where we mismanaged, where we should not have tried to address that infrastructure deficit.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. HEDDERSON: Six point two six, so just make note of that because again that is a significant figure and in my mind that was worth every penny.

Now, as you know, education is one of my fortes; I certainly keep a close eye on education. Even in this Budget, which we are being condemned about, guess what? Budget 2015 allocates \$926 million for key initiatives, including \$45.7 million for Caring our Future strategy, early childhood development; \$10.5 million to continue implementation of full-day Kindergarten beginning in September of 2016; and \$95 million for K-2 school infrastructure projects – facts.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I challenge anyone to tell me could we have not done any of that? Certainly we could not have done some of that, but would it interfere with where we need to be? It certainly would.

As well since 2004, the provincial government has allocated more than \$731 million for key K-12 infrastructure to ensure students and teachers continue to enjoy safe and healthy learning environment. We have opened fourteen new schools, we have eleven more in stages, and twenty-seven major extension and renovation projects completed, with thirteen more

underway. Almost 2,000 repairs and maintenance projects have been approved – again keeping up and trying to make sure that we are investing wisely which we have.

We have developed a multi-year educational infrastructure development plan which will prepare – so if you are looking for the future, this is here. Of course we have outlined some of the places that we are going to be going in order to continue to invest heavily in that infrastructure.

Budget 2015 includes \$95 million for school infrastructure projects to support this plan, including over \$8.2 million for – well there is a whole list of schools there. I do not need to go through them; you have heard them before. Over \$65.2 million for ongoing school construction projects, including the new elementary school in Paradise, schools in Conception Bay South, Virginia Park, Torbay, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, Coley's Point, Gander, and the Waterford Valley High School in St. John's. The west end high school is back – just imagine.

I was there back in, I think, it was 1999 when they were in fighting the school board, to keep that open, to keep a high school in the west end. It was closed and finally twelve years later we are going to get a west end high school. Was that money wisely invested? Absolutely. I would even look up on the shore, the Witless Bay one that is there, a new school, and badly needed and what, we, as a government saw as a priority.

Per pupil investment for K-12 has increased from 7,400 in 2003 to 13,000. Of course, should we give up on the school fees? We eliminated standard school fees. That is an investment of \$56 million. We have extended the provision of free textbooks. That is \$21 million. We have invested \$538 million – that is about 62 per cent of the entire K-12 education budget in 2014 for teacher salaries. We go on and we go on.

My time is winding down. I think it is important that we do present, as a government, where we have invested our money. Someone once said that no good deed goes unpunished. Of course, that applies to governments as well. For all that

we have accomplished, there is still a lot more that we need to do. That will continue.

I had the privilege of serving in Transportation and Works. The investments over time in that particular area of bridges and roads have just been tremendous. I also had the privilege of christening the *Grace Sparkes* and the *Hazel McIsaac*, two boats that were built here in Newfoundland and Labrador that are serving the islands very, very well. Of course, I am looking forward to the arrival of the *MV Veteran* for the Fogo Island-Change Islands and the *Legionnaire* for the Bell Island service.

Mr. Speaker, again, significant investments that have been a long time coming. I might add, I guess through the 1990s I can remember, what a mistake the previous government made by not putting in a second *Flanders*. It was on the books and ready to go, but they came in and they cancelled it. That new *Flanders* would have been a tremendous asset. They had just built the *Flanders* one. There was one that was ready to go, but in austerity and that sort of thing they looked at it and said no, we will not do it. Their answer to it was to bring in older boats. Of course we know what *Hull 100* or whatever, what that was. Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important.

Mr. Speaker, with one minute and twenty-six seconds left I have to tell you that there are lots of outcomes and indicators. I can go on and on about how we have tried as best we can to make sure that the money that is our responsibility as the governing party does respond to the needs of the people. I did not get into some of the other areas that we invested in.

Pay equity, an issue that was held over from the 1980s, most of the members would understand that. We as a government were able to take that off the books and repay some of the grief that was put on government employees by inequitable pay. As well, the pension plans for our public service, the \$2 billion that we invested, had we not I can only imagine where we would be today.

As well, the deals that we have made; would anyone want to draw back that 22.5 per cent that was given to the public service and the other additional, I think, 4 per cent that has been of

late, almost 16 per cent? That is why we as a government believe that we did hit the mark on making sure that we not only took care of the money, but we did it for the right reasons.

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

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the people of L'Anse au Clair I am going to stand and use my time to talk about some of the wastage of this government, some of the mismanagement, and how we feel about that. Mr. Speaker, before I start I could hardly believe my ears, what I heard coming out of the co-leader of the NDP. I could hardly believe my ears. She wondered why we would stand here today and we would want to talk about wastage and mess.

Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This government would lead the people to believe that there are only two options to getting out of this mess that they have us in: tax and borrow. Reducing waste is one of the ways to get our Province's finances under control – reducing waste. That is why, Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important that we remind people of what this government have done, of some of the very bad choices that have led us to the mess that we are into today.

When I was listening to the co-leader of the NDP, I thought about the PMR that we put forward, one of the ways that we could save money in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador by not paying the parliamentary secretaries; I think it is a savings of around \$185,000 a year. They did not support it, but day after day they stood and asked for the family violence court to be reinstated, which we supported as well. That was one way to get the money back, one of the ways that we could save.

Mr. Speaker, several members opposite today talked about policy, how we have no policy. What I want to say to them is that any time we identified a policy we did have, they have seen that it was a good idea and they have gone and implemented it. If they want to see the rest of the policy that we have, drop the writ and let the people of Newfoundland and Labrador decide who they have confidence in.

Because what I have been hearing since the Budget came down on April 29 is that after twelve years – they can talk about the Liberals and the previous Administrations, but the facts speak for themselves. No other government in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador have ever had the money at their disposal that this government have had: \$25 billion in oil.

Now the minister the other day tried to correct that and say it was \$18 billion. Well, I say to the minister, it was \$19 billion and it was \$5 billion in Atlantic Accord, so you are very close to \$25 billion, much closer than you are to \$18 billion. I want to go on record, but I do not know maybe he got some help from the Finance Minister in adding up his figures there, Mr. Speaker.

What we are dealing with here is a government that in twelve years have had \$25 billion in oil, we are facing the biggest deficit that we have ever had in the Province, and now after twelve years they are saying stick with us; we have a plan – stick with us for five more years; we have a plan.

I want to say that when I travel the Province the people see through that. Mr. Speaker, I have to mention before I get too much into it, when I was back in my district on the weekend I overheard a conversation between a father and a daughter. Neither one of them are connected with any political party. I did not think that they followed politics or anything very much, but it stuck with me as I travelled back.

I heard the father – I guess thinking out loud – say it is unreal, the taxes, the hikes, and the fee increases now that the average person is going to have to pay for to help get this Province out of the mess. The young girl said: Dad, I guess that is why the low-income people in this Province are always stuck on the bottom.

Just imagine, that is what a young girl, a student said. She said: Dad, I guess that is why the low-income people in this Province are always stuck on the bottom. Because you have a government that mismanaged millions – we have heard it here today; I am not going to repeat the amounts – billions and billions and then they want to reach deep into the pockets of the average and the low-income people.

I am going to talk a little bit about that but on the flight – I do not know if it was that same trip home – I opened up *The Telegram* and I thought that one of the writers at *The Telegram* had done a very good job chronicling the cost and what it is going to mean every other day to the average person, and I want to highlight some of that. She talked about people having to keep their heat down now and feel cold because of the 8 per cent increase that is going to go back on their power bills, an 8 per cent increase back on the power bills come July. She talked about the Residential Energy Rebate that would be eliminated, a \$200 bill last year, and \$216 bill this year.

Mr. Speaker, those numbers add up. She talked about the pool increase fees. My colleague for Conception Bay South referenced that in questions earlier this week. We are doing everything we can to promote healthy living, yet we are increasing fees in areas where we are trying to encourage people to get out and to live active lifestyles.

The Minister of Health got up today and talked about what they are doing in the Department of Health, Mr. Speaker. We held a roundtable on health in August, 2013 and we brought everybody together from long-term care operators, private ambulance, at the table. They said no one had talked to them – no one. The interesting thing that came out of that, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day two large groups in that room, nobody asked for extra money but they wanted to have more say in how to spend smarter.

If the Minister of Health thinks everything is under control, I want to flag to his attention something in my district, in Forteau –fifteen beds: one palliative care, one respite, thirteen beds. Mr. Speaker, there is a very long wait-list. Every single day I hear from families who want

to bring their dad closer to home so they can visit, want to bring their mom home.

In half of my district, from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay, we have eighty people over the age of eighty, and we have thirteen beds. We cannot afford to put the infrastructure there that we need because we have seen billions and billions in wastage. That is the reality. That is the price that people are paying when you have mismanaged finances, Mr. Speaker. It is very, very sad.

Back to the fee increases. We see registration gone \$20; and 30 per cent on a senior's licence now for moose hunting. We are back to health again. We are talking about healthy choices and a diet is a part of that. We all know that if you can go out and you can kill a moose, or you can live off the land, like my colleague here for Torngat likes to do, it is a healthier lifestyle.

Yet the fees are going up right across the board, everything from camping right down to your milkshake at the end of the day. Do you know what happened? We have seen good times. Over the last ten, twelve years there has been a lot of money flowing, but it has been very, very seriously mismanaged. Now what is this government trying to do? Tax us to prosperity. Tax us, everything that you can possibly imagine. Mr. Speaker, 261 fee hikes is what they are trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, I went through a list of some of the wastage. I looked at the former Premier Dunderdale when she brazenly appointed a former deputy minister to a six-figure job in a newly created office. No accountability, no transparency. Do you know why? Because we were living under a big black cloak called Bill 29.

Despite all of the debate in the House around Bill 29, despite everybody talking about the ruthless draconian piece of legislation, despite it having national attention, they went right on and plowed through and they brought in Bill 29. There has been nothing but cartloads of toner going up in the elevators ever since, Mr. Speaker. It was right around the time they were sanctioning Muskrat Falls.

I can hardly mention it, Mr. Speaker, Muskrat Falls, because it turns my stomach too bad. The reality of Muskrat Falls, I am living with it. It is in my eyes front and centre every single day. The Joint Review Panel and the PUB, the only two groups that were going to do an independent review, they did not even get time to do that. We see that this project has ballooned into, what, \$8 billion, \$9 billion, \$10 billion? Nobody seems to be concerned about that, Mr. Speaker. You know what is amazing, when I stand and I speak for the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and when I talk about the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair who cannot get jobs, who are qualified; this is a hard-working people. They are not asking for anything to be given to them.

Yet the few people who we did get into Muskrat – I am going to tell you how messed up it is there, and my colleague for Torngat will attest to this. The people who do get in there say they cannot work. I said, what do you mean you cannot work? Cannot work; they are telling us to slow down, slow down, do not work.

This winter mostly what they did, because we are dealing with the elements in Labrador, is they spent most of their time shovelling. They went through 23,000 litres of fuel a day to keep the place heated in the dead of winter. The project is plowing on through and our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Mr. Speaker, are going to pay for it. That is one of the examples of wastage. That project could have been better managed but it was not.

We see vacant buildings, Mr. Speaker, all around the Province. I do not know if the co-leader of the NDP was referencing schools scheduled for demolition that we are still paying heat and light on, if she believes that is not wastage. This is not politics we are playing here. It is very, very important to highlight this. It is important for the people of the Province to understand the wastage that has occurred here. It is important that lessons be learned here.

Yes, we cannot always be looking back. I love the quote that says there is a reason why our windshield is bigger than our rear-view mirror. Mr. Speaker, we have to look back and we have to learn valuable lessons from the past.

The moose warning system; over and over again still lives are being lost. It is a failed system, Mr. Speaker. Parliamentary Secretaries – back in the early winter months we heard much about Judy Manning, an unelected minister. Was there nobody over there who was competent enough to fill that position, that the Premier had to step outside and bring someone in? We saw all the headaches and the havoc that it wreaked.

Then I would be remiss if I stood here today and did not mention Humber Valley Paving. Mr. Speaker, \$19 million released in bid bonds. We hear much about mechanics' liens. The day that I was kicked out of the House for telling the truth – because that is what happened. I got kicked out of the House for telling the truth. I stood for what I believed in. I stood by the people. I stood by the businesses.

Do you know that I had a number of businesses contact me? One of them made a very good point. One of them said you talk about mechanics' lien and thirty days to put in a lien. When your main bread and butter in a community historically does not pay you in less than a sixty to ninety-day period, why are you going to put in a mechanics' lien in thirty days? When you normally have your money in sixty to ninety, why are you going to do that and put it in?

So these people were left holding the bag because decisions were made that were wrong. We know from the report the Auditor General did that he did not find sufficient information that satisfied him, that answered his questions, Mr. Speaker. Bill 29; I did not mention when I was up the \$1 million that it cost when Marshall ordered a review, finally, after a lot of public outcry.

My time is almost out. I did not even get to mention in my district the millions and the billions that we talked about here today, Mr. Speaker, in wastage and how far that would go. I represent a part of the Province where the cost of travel is astronomical. My colleague here, for him to get to Goose Bay, to Nain, and back is almost \$1,000.

Guess what happened, because of this government's blatant, mismanagement of finances, now they are going to hike landing fee

costs. For me to get on a plane in Charlottetown for forty minutes and go to St. Anthony it costs me almost \$500. People cannot afford it, Mr. Speaker.

I have communities, Mr. Speaker, like Black Tickle where men are going out in small boats into ice trying to get to a neighbouring community to get to the boat to start fishing this summer because they cannot book a flight to get out of the community. There are 150 people in that town and you cannot pick up the phone and make reservations to travel out. Then they wonder why we raise the issues of where we live. They talk about equality. It is not equality, it is inequality.

Sometimes I really think these people believe their own spin.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member's time has expired.

MS DEMPSTER: I believe the people of the Province are going to have the final say come election day.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is always a pleasure to get up and speak in this House and represent the wonderful District of Exploits like all our members do. We always like to mention our districts of course.

We are accused of being part of a government that overspent. Yes, I think we did. We overspent on necessities, that is the thing. Who knew what was going to happen with the oil? If the people want to go back to the former Liberal Administration – and she talks about the former Administrations of other parties.

She wants to go back to when there was no money, when they had the big Read and Succeed program going. At the same time they were closing down schools because they amalgamated the schools. I do not know what they did with

the money that they saved, and of course, not to mention all the money that was spent on wine and Waterford Crystal.

That was when we had no money and depended on the feds to get some money because we were not a have Province. They do not want to hear that though. They do not want to hear it. Well, you know what; I will not talk about it anymore. I will give it up for the very simple reason that I want to talk about what we have done, the money we have spent, why we did it, the reason we did it, and why it was necessary, Mr. Speaker.

I know I do not have a lot of time this evening, but I just want to try to stick to one topic, a topic that is near and dear to me and near and dear to all the members here in this House I am sure it is – all the members on this side anyway for sure. There are two things actually, our Poverty Reduction Strategy, what we do for seniors, and how we respect our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I remember back a few years ago when we brought in two things actually. We brought in the Continuum of Care for foster families and we introduced a Poverty Reduction Strategy in this Province that was rated second to none in the country. As a matter of fact, there was a person from this Province who went on to teach as a professor at MacEwan University in Alberta. I just happen to know that person.

When we were highlighting our Poverty Reduction Strategy, when we were redoing our foster care and our Continuum of Care, she called me actually. She said is there a way that somebody, a minister from your government, can come up here and talk to the students here in this university? That is how well known it was. It was widespread.

Do you know why? I am going to give you some of the reasons why. This has to be part of the wastage that they are saying was part – well actually part of the wastage, yes, but I am saying that I am glad we spent it and all the members on this side are.

Mr. Speaker, when I am dealing with facts and numbers, I usually like to refer to a sheet because it gives me the right information; however, our Affordable Housing Agreement,

the latest \$68 million investment in Affordable Housing Agreement for 2014-2019 will provide \$27 million over the next five years to create 500 more new affordable housing units. I do not think that is a waste. I think the people out there really appreciate that we are doing this. I do not think they are going to say, well, we do not want this. You are throwing your money away, you are wasting your money.

The remaining \$41 million will help fund the Provincial Home Repair Program. About 86 per cent of people assisted under the Provincial Home Repair Program are seniors with low incomes; 86 per cent of the people assisted under the Provincial Home Repair Program are seniors with low incomes.

In fact, through the Affordable Housing Program, 632 housing units have been constructed or renovated specifically for seniors since 2006. At least one in every ten units built under the program is fully accessible. In addition, it is important to note that in 2011 the corporation made universal design a mandatory requirement on all affordable housing program funded projects.

The Provincial Home Repair Program provided \$6.4 million last year through the Provincial Home Repair Program to help about 1,700 clients. I am glad I was part of that. In fact, in the past eight years 18,622 grants were provided to low-income homeowners to make needed repairs to their homes; and, get this, about 86 per cent of people helped under this program are low-income seniors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Sure we can applaud ourselves for that. Sure we can, because they appreciate it. I get calls all the time, and they are telling me: Clayton, this is a great program, you have to keep going with it.

We have the Rent Supplement Program, the Residential Energy Efficiency Program, Partnered Managed Housing Program. Mr. Speaker, we have a Provincial Advisory Council on Seniors and Aging. We have the Low Income Seniors' tax Benefit, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

It being 4:45 o'clock, I call on the hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East to close debate.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, the purpose of this debate was to bring some attention to the waste that is happening within government and how we can work to reducing some of that waste. It is also about talking about processes that we can have in place in this House to bring about the reduction of waste and what we should be doing with government to examine expenditure and how we spend monies. I think it is a very important discussion to have, Mr. Speaker. It can become a very political discussion if you want it to be, but it is also an important discussion to have in a serious way about what are the provisions we have in place to look after finances.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to look at, how did we arrive in the situation we are today? If we were to listen to the people on the other side, they would have us believe they were merely bystanders in this whole situation. They were just there and it happened to them. They had no control, no role in what happened or how it came about.

We have to look a little deeper than that, Mr. Speaker, because I think if we look at the way the finances of this Province have been managed in the last twelve years – we look at things like the Public Accounts Committee and what has happened to the Public Accounts Committee in this Province over the last twelve years. There was one point in the twelve years where the Public Accounts Committee of this House was not even operational. They did not meet for – I believe it was about two years the Public Accounts Committee did not meet.

The only thing that really kick-started the Public Accounts Committee again was when the Green report came out and pointed out that there is something wrong when you do not have a functioning Public Accounts Committee in the House. It is an important topic to look at. It is also important to look at the reasons of why we are where we are now and what provisions could be put in place to prevent that.

We recently talked about the new freedom of information legislation. I am just going to take a couple of seconds to say how that relates to this whole issue of reducing waste, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the whole idea of freedom of information is that people have a right to the same access that members of government have access to. If the taxpayers have paid for a consultant's report, then they have a right to have access to that report and get the same information that the government members have. That was not the case in this Province for a long time.

It was interesting to listen to the Member for Bay of Islands when he spoke in that debate just a couple of days ago, Mr. Speaker, to explain that in some cases the Premier of the Province did not even have access to the information that was vital to making an important decision about cancer treatment in this Province, on the West Coast of the Province in particular. The provisions we have in this House and the provisions we have in government to contain waste are important. When they fall into disrepair, it has consequences.

Mr. Speaker, freedom of information, it may seem a different topic, but really it is related. If we do not have freedom of information, we do not have an informed debate about how we are going to spend money, how we should be spending money, and where the waste exists. These are related topics and things that I wanted to connect.

Mr. Speaker, there is more evidence of the lack of cost controls this government has had in previous years. The Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde recently talked about the \$45 million in business loans that were written off by this government. The Member for Bay of Islands outlined \$380 million of expenditures that were not being accounted for, I guess in a lot of cases wastage.

The Member for Virginia Waters recently talked about the efforts this government is making to collect a relatively small amount of money from seniors in this Province. Sometimes it is not just about collecting the money, because they are going to spend almost as much money collecting this money as they are going to draw in.

Sometimes it is a matter of common sense in terms of whether you collect money from seniors who are seventy, eighty, ninety years old. Sometimes it is a matter of common sense, Mr. Speaker. So those are some examples of waste – and there have been other issues that have come up here as well.

Mr. Speaker, the other part of containing waste and making prudent expenditures is making wise expenditures. Many people have talked about strengthening health care in this Province, but we have to look at health in a broader sense. Rather than just health care, we have to look at health and wellness. Those are some things that we have to look at.

In terms of post-secondary education and the way we spend money on post-secondary education, all the evidence is in, for anyone who wants to see it, that investment in post-secondary education and early childhood education are good investments for society. Places that are doing well economically now are places that invested in education years ago, and continue to invest in education.

So, being able to have the money to make those wise investments, Mr. Speaker, and to choose the right priorities is a very important part of what we should be doing in this Province. It is something that we have not always done.

There is an old saying: you can be penny wise and pound foolish. Sometimes you can save a few pennies by not investing now, but the consequences later on are disastrous. So I think those are some things that we should take into account as well.

Mr. Speaker, an example of this might be full-day Kindergarten. That was a Liberal initiative that we put forward. The government took that initiative, and I guess we are sort of happy that they took that policy, because it is going to be good for the Province.

Also in the Budget they talk about developing this Generations Fund. They just threw out the idea of a Generations Fund. There are very few details, and there has not been any discussion on how this is actually going to take place, or what form it is going to take.

How is the money going to be saved? What are going to be the restrictions on taking the money out? In Norway they have restrictions where you can only take the interest out each year. How is the money in this fund going to be invested? Is it going to be invested in Newfoundland, or is it going to have to be invested in other jurisdictions? In Norway they have a restriction that most of the money has to be invested in things outside the Province. So these are sort of ideas that have been kicking around, but we really have not had a sufficient debate on this.

I just want to say I am very disappointed that the NDP does not think it is important to talk about waste in this Province – very disappointed – but I guess it is consistent with their overall approach. The same as the members opposite, they think they can tax their way out of problems like this. They can just continue to tax people. They do not have to worry about things.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: They do not have to worry about things; that is their policy. Tax, Mr. Speaker, that is their plan.

Well, I think we have pretty well exhausted the debate on this topic for today. I think it is an important topic, but I will sit down and take my place and adjourn the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the House ready for the vote?

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: The resolution is defeated.

On motion, resolution defeated.

MR. SPEAKER: It being Wednesday and the business of the House concluded, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.