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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I am pleased to welcome to the public gallery today members of the Seniors Club from the Long Pond Salvation Army Corps in Conception Bay South.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We also have several members of the Child and Youth Care Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. They are: Rick Kelly, Jamie Lundrigan, Natalie Bursey, Jackie Kelly, Tina Krol, Jennifer Kettle, and Lori Leonard.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Finally, in the public gallery today we have Mr. Ross Tansley, who is a Reservist with the Canadian Forces.

Welcome, Sir, to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for your service, Sir.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the members representing the Districts of St. John's South, Conception Bay South, Cape St. Francis, Bellevue, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, and Baie Verte – Springdale.

The hon. the Member for the District of St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Selam Measho was reunited with her mother Genet Abraham after four years. She was kidnapped when she left a refugee camp in

Libya to sell bread at the market. Her family made it to Canada in 2013.

Due to the efforts of a community of people, Selam was located in a town two hours outside of Amsterdam. I stand today to recognize those involved in helping reunite her with her family.

I would like to recognize Susan Glynn and Denise Dunne who first brought this issue to my attention; Lisa Snow from Gerry Byrne's office who got the ball moving with Immigration Canada; and Mrs. Williams from Mount Pearl who contacted the Red Cross and got posters posted in Germany and in Holland. I would like to thank all members of the community who played an active role in reuniting Selam with her family.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members of the House to join with me in welcoming Selam to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to stand in this hon. House today and recognize the diversity and strength of the faith community in the Town of Conception Bay South. The strength of this group manifests itself in the Conception Bay South Ministerial Association, a group of clergy who work co-operatively with the town for the betterment of all its residents.

Today, I would like to recognize one specific project between the church community and our town. In the past, the Long Pond Salvation Army Corps has provided support during local emergencies. However, the town does not have the ability to provide heated space for residents in case of prolonged emergencies.

In co-operation with the town, the Salvation Army Corps has offered its church and hall as a warm space. The town has committed to the necessary electrical infrastructure, including an industrial generator. If power goes for an

extended period of time, the generator will simply be switched on and any residents of the town who find themselves in a position of need will have a warm place to go for the duration of the emergency.

Please join me in recognizing this co-operative initiative and all the great work that all the faith communities perform throughout our Province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to recognize the good people from the community of Pouch Cove. In 2000, the Pouch Cove Volunteer Fire Department needed a new fire truck at a cost of \$225,000. A cost-sharing arrangement was made between the provincial government contributing 50 per cent; the Town of Pouch Cove, 25 per cent; and the fire department, 25 per cent.

To assist the fire hall with their share of the cost, the late firefighter Willis Butt and his brother, Tom Butt, decided that by collecting recyclables they could help with the expenses. In 2001 they started the initiative, and the idea quickly grew as the fire hall decided to collect recyclables also.

In addition, they collect twice a year – once in May, and once in September. Since its inception in 2001, the Butt brothers have collected a value of \$14,315.15, and the fire hall has collected \$58,710.39, a total of \$73,025.54 in collecting recyclables. Since his brother's passing, Tom Butt, along with the fire department, still continues to collect recyclables.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in congratulating the two brothers and the Towns of Pouch Cove and Bauline for supporting their fire department.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Mr. George Monk who celebrated his 104th birthday on May 17, 2015. This is such a remarkable milestone. Through 104 years of memories and 104 years of life, Mr. Monk has done more than most of us can dream of.

George grew up in Monkstown where he married and raised a family.

It is almost impossible to grasp the tremendous changes that occurred in our world since George's birth in 1911.

He began working with his father in a sawmill at a very early age and eventually opened a small convenience store in Monkstown. He continued to work both jobs until he turned sixty. Upon retirement he and his wife moved to Clarendville.

George now resides in a retirement home in Clarendville and is well loved by all the residents. He is enjoying good health, wonderful memories, and doing everything for himself. He is a man to be admired.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all the members of this House to join me in congratulating and celebrating George Monk's longevity on the occasion of his 104th birthday. I wish him all the best in the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Indeed, congratulations to Mr. Monk of Monkstown, 104 is a great age.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to deliver accolades to the Coast of Bays' talented participants in the fiftieth Central Newfoundland Kiwanis Music Festival. Thank you to our music instructors, Valerie Coombs and Brenda Jeddore for their hard work and dedication with over 280 exceptionally talented performers.

Congratulations to Damien Hibbs for his Adjudicator's Award for Solo Speech and the Bay d'Espoir Academy Choir for their Adjudicator's Award for Choirs. The Best Vocal Ensemble went to the Bay d'Espoir Triple Trio and the Best Choral Group was awarded to the Se't A'Newey Performance Choir. Jessica Willcott won the Award for Traditional Folk Song.

It is an honour for me to extend congratulations to all the performers, too numerous to list, who shone at the festival. From singing to playing piano, to solo speeches our students excelled, placing first, second and third in various categories.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me, along with classmates, teachers, and community residents in extending congratulations to all participants for their excellent performances. We hope you continue participating in many more music festivals. Thank you for sharing your amazing gift of music.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On May 8, my wife and I had the honour to attend the graduation ceremonies of Valmont Academy of King's Point and on May 15, we attended the graduation ceremonies of Indian River High School of Springdale. All forty-six grads looked as bright as a button and as sharp as a tack as they donned their beautiful wardrobes.

Denika Squires of Valmont Academy and Christian Pelley of Indian River High delivered excellent valedictory speeches, offering many thanks to all who helped them out over the years and offering nuggets of wisdom for their classmates to consider.

My wife and I were really impressed with the calibre of speeches and the well-organized ceremonies. It is evident that school and community spirit abounds here.

Both school staffs are to be applauded for their commitment to excellence in student achievement. Both go the extra mile to see their students excel in all aspects of school life.

In addition, the parents from all communities are to be commended for their unwavering support. Their numerous hours of volunteer work in support of the schools is simply amazing.

I respectfully ask all colleagues to offer congratulations to the exceptional graduating classes of Valmont Academy and Indian River High.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to note that Service NL has received the Best Practices in Employee Support award from the Canadian Forces Liaison Council. The award was presented to the department in recognition of its support for Ross Tansley's participation in the Canadian Forces Army Reserve.

Mr. Tansley is a senior examiner in the Financial Services Regulation division of Service NL who has served the Canadian Forces Army Reserve for more than eleven years. In the course of his

service, he was a Platoon Commander for the Domestic Response Company for Newfoundland during the Hurricane Igor relief effort. He has also readied himself for a variety of scenarios by continuously engaging in training exercises throughout his career in places like Fort Pickett, Virginia, and Gagetown, New Brunswick. The provincial government has been proud to support Mr. Tansley's efforts, and as he is in the gallery today, I would like to take a moment to recognize him.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that this is not the first time a provincial government department has won this award from the Canadian Forces Liaison Council. On March 9, 2011, the former Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development was similarly recognized for supporting an employee's participation in reserve activity. The recognition our government has received in this regard can be attributed to the Reservist Leave Policy we established in 2010, which provides employment protection and benefits to employees who are members of the reserves, and who request to take special leave for reserve service.

Mr. Speaker, Ross Tansley is representative of the great people we have working in the public service in this Province, and the Reservist Leave Policy is a great example of how our government supports them. I thank Mr. Tansley and all public employees who commit their time to serving their county in the Canadian Forces Reserves. Your efforts are deeply appreciated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Certainly we, in the Official Opposition, want to also extend our congratulations to the department for receiving the Best Practices in Employee Support award from the Canadian Forces Liaison Council. We are very supportive of the Reservist Leave Policy that we have here with the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen a long list of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who have served our Province and served our country very proudly, whether it be in the regular forces or whether it be in the reserves. We certainly want to commend Mr. Tansley and all the other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for putting their hand up and serving our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I thank Ross Tansley for his valuable service to our community. Reservists play a vital role on so many levels. It is imperative that they are supported when they need to leave their jobs temporarily for service in the reserves.

The Reservist Leave Policy was a major step government finally took, following the lead of other provincial and federal governments. These laws and policies allow reservists to keep their positions and their seniority. Before they were implemented, reservists would find that their employers would refuse to commit to rehiring them. It also maintains benefits such as health plans that are important to reservists' families.

Congratulations once again to Service NL, and bravo Mr. Ross Tansley.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 stand today to recognize the Child and Youth Care Association of Newfoundland and Labrador's annual conference currently taking place at the Holiday Inn in St. John's. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the conference,

and I was delighted to address the delegates this morning and congratulate the association on ten years of advocating for children and youth in our Province. Each year, these individuals come together to exchange ideas on how to best serve the children, youth, and families of this Province who require their service.

Child and youth care workers are employed in a diverse range of roles, programs, and organizations. Mr. Speaker, throughout our Province, an estimated 600 child and youth care workers can be found in groups homes, family support programs, community centres, outreach programs, youth treatment programs, day treatment, family-based care, youth corrections facilities, hospitals, and schools. The Child and Youth Care Association of Newfoundland and Labrador provides training and education opportunities for child and youth care workers, and advocates for standards of practice.

The theme for this year's conference, *Caring in Context*, focuses on the many facets of providing care and support. It reflects the diverse nature of the provision of care, from the support needed for those who experience severe trauma to the development of supervisory skills. A number of renowned speakers are also participating in the conference including Lorraine Fox with the University of California, Davis, and the San Diego State University Foundation, and Connie Pike of the Coalition Against Violence.

Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to moving forward in enhancing the lives of young people in a variety of ways: addressing poverty, violence, and mental health issues; enhancing education; working more collaboratively with Aboriginal communities; and enhancing health care and wellness. An investment of \$475,000 in Budget 2015 allows for the creation of six new Child, Youth and Family Services front-line positions in Labrador, allowing our government to meet the commitment of a 1 to 20 ratio for social workers to caseload on a provincial level. We recognize we still have challenges in many of our remote communities and we will continue to focus on improving caseloads in these areas.

It is important that we work collaboratively with organizations such as the Child and Youth Care Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, as

we continue to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in our Province. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to once again congratulate the Child and Youth Care Association of Newfoundland and Labrador on ten years of providing much needed support to our most vulnerable children and youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Conferences are a tremendous opportunity for like-minded professionals to come together, share better practices, and rejuvenate one another in what can be very fatiguing work.

Child and youth care workers work with children and youth with complex needs. Many of these children have experienced trauma and we know the far-reaching effects of these lived experiences such as mental health issues, substance abuse, poverty, homelessness, and sexual exploitation.

I noticed approaches such as trauma-informed care and mindfulness being presented at the conference, and it is very beneficial for workers to come together and share approaches as they help children grow into healthy and happy adults.

The minister also mentioned again the issues of violence and poverty, and it brings to mind the sexual exploitation report that government commissioned and then hid. I know the department is trying to move forward and I commend that, but one way to do that is to acknowledge the harsh realities that exist out there, even in this Province.

The Child and Youth Care Association of Newfoundland and Labrador was formed in 1990, and on behalf of our caucus I would like to congratulate them on their twenty-fifth anniversary and their tenth conference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Congratulations to child and youth care workers in Newfoundland and Labrador, unsung heroes for all their hard work with children and youth and their families. I know how difficult but valuable this work is. I too was once a child and youth care worker.

I applaud government for committing to achieve a caseload ratio of one social worker to twenty children, even in remote communities. I hope by working with Aboriginal organizations it will result in more Aboriginal social workers in the system. Their expertise is crucial. Many of the situations of children at risk in our Province have roots in parental poverty and lack of support, including safe, affordable housing and lack of mental health services for early intervention.

Government must put more resources into families so fewer children will be taken into their care.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member her speaking time has expired.

MS ROGERS: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to acknowledge the recipients of the 2015 URock Volunteer Awards. I was pleased to be joined by the Premier, my hon. colleagues, and members opposite last Thursday night as we honoured this year's award recipients at a special event in Mount Pearl.

The URock Volunteer Awards were established in 2010 to celebrate the remarkable ways youth are giving back to their communities. Along with the people who attended the event at the Glacier in person, the event was livestreamed on our NLYouth.ca website and viewed hundreds of times.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the recipients of the 2015 URock Volunteer Awards, some of whom are with us in the gallery today. They are: Courtney Jones of Torbay; Meagan Sampson from Stephenville; Nitish Bhatt from St. John's; Brittany Tibbo from Holyrood; Mackenzie Dove from Clarenville; Megan Glover from Bay Bulls; Mallory Basha from Corner Brook; and the Youth Leadership Council, a program of Choices for Youth, which is an organization that works to empower at-risk and homeless youth in St. John's.

The event was hosted by Mike Fardy, and featured live performances by Jenna Maloney, Stompbox, and City on the Coast as well as community booths from volunteer organizations. Award recipients each received an electric guitar, customized by students of the graphic design program at College of the North Atlantic, to celebrate the innovative ways young people volunteer. The following morning, to explore the potential of their prize, award winners were given a guitar lesson by local musician, Steve Maloney.

Mr. Speaker, from raising funds for the Terry Fox Foundation, organizing Christmas food hampers, caring for animals, encouraging child literacy, and preparing meals through school breakfast clubs, youth are finding innovative solutions and giving back to their communities. The URock Volunteer Awards celebrate those efforts and help to remind us that youth are continuously effecting change by looking outside themselves and challenging the status quo.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the 2015 URock Volunteer Award winners.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. It is clear that youth of our Province are accomplishing remarkable feats; many of them are going unnoticed. On behalf of the Official Opposition, we commend these youth and youth organizations for being recognized for the great work they do to advance their community.

I have worked with some of these youth as part of economic development networks and the emerging leaders team. As a youth myself, and MHA for the Official Opposition responsible for youth engagement, I brought critical issues to the House raising this government's abandoned Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy, the cut programs, and promises associated with it. I questioned and called for the reinstatement of the Youth Advisory Committee.

Although the electric guitars are nice, the \$3,000 price tag may have more of an impact if youth are given the choice for maybe a charitable grant or a scholarship to help further education or development.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Certainly, encouraging young people to volunteer is an extremely important thing to do. I am happy to congratulate the winners here today and also want to congratulate all young people in the Province who volunteer in the community. For every award winner there are a hundred unsung heroes, and I know the award winners of today realize that. My wishes and my caucus best wishes to all of them.

Today's youth volunteer is tomorrow's adult volunteer, as giving back to the community is a hard habit to break. It is a good one. Volunteer

organizations work on shoestring budgets, I remind the minister, and need all the help and encouragement they can get, both with awards and more tangible supports.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last Tuesday, the Premier contradicted the minister of culture on the Gallipoli caribou memorial. Then on Wednesday, he contradicted the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills on Memorial's tuition. Yesterday, he contradicted the Minister of Fisheries on the OCI agreement in Fortune.

I ask the Premier: Why are you saying that OCI has lived up to their agreement in Fortune when this is clearly not the case?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I referenced yesterday was that OCI had made a commitment to obtain another vessel – they have lived up to that commitment. They made a commitment to make improvements and investments in the plant in Fortune. Their anticipation was a million-dollar investment, Mr. Speaker. It was almost \$2 million of investment that they made in Fortune.

What I am saying is that OCI is committed to trying to make this work. They have made their efforts to make it work. Their actions have spoken loudly to the commitment to the people of Fortune. They have provided valuable

employment to the people in Fortune, and they will continue to do so this year.

We believe, based on the information in the catches that are occurring right now, that the plant will be open and operational in early June.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The plant in Fortune sits idle today while government continues to allow OCI to breach the 2012 agreement and, on top of that, government has allowed OCI to ship out unprocessed cod last year. The Premier says that the OCI agreement in Fortune has nothing to do with cod.

I ask the Premier: If that is true, why does your 2012 press release say that cod is part of the agreement?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The agreement with OCI was a plan for the future. The exemptions are separate from that agreement, and I can tell you why. There were numerous exemptions that were talked about this House yesterday and talked about publicly. A very small amount, a relatively small amount, of the cod was actually shipped out last year.

Shipping out cod is about providing opportunity to find new markets, new mechanisms to build industry and build business in Newfoundland and Labrador, because we know we need to find a way to build the industry of the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, this is about the best interests of those, especially in rural parts of our Province, who rely on the fisheries, communities who rely on the fisheries, FFAW who want to represent their harvesters and their plant workers, and we are here working with all of those stakeholders.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, my comment to the Premier was about his comments that he made in this House and to the people of this Province and the people of Fortune and that area just yesterday when he said this agreement back in 2012 has nothing to do with cod.

I ask the Premier: Do you stand by the comments that you made yesterday?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the member opposite that their vision is about cod; their vision is about sustainability in the long term. The agreement was about trying to find a way to process yellowtail here in the Province. What has happened in the catches this year is that what they have seen during the winter – they saw last year in the winter – is that the catch was smaller than was anticipated. In their business plan, they had anticipated a certain size of the catch that will allow a certain level of production in their plant. If that catch is not there and they are not achieving the catch and the goal that they require, it makes it difficult to process what they are not catching.

We have an option here. We work with the company, we work with the community, we work with the union, we work with the workers, Mr. Speaker, we work with the town to ensure that work is provided in Fortune; or we say to OCI, thirty-two weeks or nothing. Because we know what OCI will do. They will pack up and leave, Mr. Speaker, and we do not want that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, part of entering into an agreement is that someone needs to keep companies and people who invest in the Province accountable to the agreements that they sign. In 2012, OCI clearly signed an agreement with your government – and it says this, that cod production will begin in January 2013, with approximately sixty jobs being created.

So what has changed since that agreement was signed, I say to the Premier? Do you stand by the comments that you made yesterday?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I will tell this House what I stand by. I stand by working with the people of Fortune to ensure they have the best opportunity in the fishery for those people who rely on processing jobs in Fortune.

That is what we stand by over here. We stand by the willingness to work with industry and business in this Province – no matter where it is – to create jobs and create opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We stand by the growth of the fishery, Mr. Speaker. We stand by giving them a chance to make a go of it in small harbours, and small ports, and small towns. That is what we stand by over here. We stand by those people, and we want a fishery that is going to be sustainable for the long term.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you one place that this Premier is not standing by the people – that is in Fortune, because there is no fish processing line at that plant today, I say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, it has been reported that the government cuts to Memorial University in Budget 2015 will be much higher than

originally suggested. We understand that a \$20.9 million pension payment has been deferred.

So I ask the Premier: Can you confirm that this pension payment was deferred?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I can confirm a number of things relative to Memorial University and the pension plan. Since 2005, we have been working with memorial to invest in the pension plan – that is part of legislative requirements – to the tune of about \$129 million. As part of Budget 2015, we have worked with the university to try to find some savings in a number of areas, and one of the areas that we have targeted is the pension plan, Mr. Speaker.

As I am sure the member opposite has heard from representatives of the university, they recognize that they have a responsibility – it is a pension plan that belongs to their members, not to the people of the Province, the general public, and they recognize they have to find a solution to that, and they are committed to try and find that solution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, in September, the former Premier reached an agreement with the Public Service Pension Plan Reform and it was called a sustainable solution. Last month, we saw the government reach an agreement with the Teachers' Pension Plan, but now, they are deferring payments from the Memorial Pension Plan.

How can you say that this is a sustainable solution by kicking this payment down the road for the next generation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the agreement we reached on the Public Service Pension Plan, and we are very proud of the agreement we reached on the Teachers' Pension Plan, because it shows the leadership of our Premier and this government and our commitment to the public service employees.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: We also recognize, Mr. Speaker, that members of the pension plan at Memorial University are not part of the public service nor the teacher pension plan. We have been talking to them. They recognize they have ownership of that particular problem. They recognize and thank government for the tremendous investment we made over the last ten years to try and sustain that plan, but they also recognize they have to get the deficit in order for the long-term viability of the plan, and that is what they are working towards.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would suggest to the minister, this not about saving if you are actually deferring a payment that will have to be made.

I ask the Premier: Was there any discussion with your government with the Board of Regents or with Memorial University on this deferred payment?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we have had significant discussions with Memorial University on this particular issue, just like we did with the teacher plan, with members of the Teachers' Union and with the Public Service

Pension Plan with NAPE, and we will continue to have those discussions.

I say to the member opposite, this is not about kicking the problem down the road. It is about taking the challenges head on this year and recognizing that there is a \$20 million problem to solve. If we wanted to play politics, we could simply pay the money this year, get through an election, and then break the news to them that there is a \$20 million problem.

This Premier has taken the leadership to make the right decisions today because it has to be made. We are telling Memorial that we have to find a solution to the problem. We will work with them but they have to be a partner in that problem, and we have to start at it today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know the process here about the pension plan reform. This was an actuaries report and there was \$20.9 million that they were expected to pay this year.

I ask the minister: Was this a suggestion by your government to defer this pension plan payment?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would well know, any decisions that were made as part of a Budget that has been tabled here by the Minister of Finance would be decisions of this government, but what I can say to the member opposite is that we have had significant discussions about all aspects of our Budget as it pertains to Memorial University.

Over many days, we have had officials in. Over a period of weeks, perhaps even over a period of months, I do not recall, but I participated in most of those meeting, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you there were significant discussions about trying to right-size the budget of Memorial in the context

of the Budget challenges the Province faced, and right-size the pension liability over there, recognizing we could not continue to sustain a deficit pension problem, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it is difficult to right-size a liability, I say to the minister. A liability is a liability, it is tough to right-size that.

This government announced the construction of a long-term care facility in Pleasantville in 2008. That is seven years ago, Mr. Speaker. It finally opened last September. Government had seven years to develop and implement a human resources plan for that facility but they are currently short twenty-six staff. Because of that, we now have thirty beds that are still not open.

I ask the Premier: Why haven't you been able to fill these positions and open the long-term care beds?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, patient safety is a top priority. We are not going to open beds unless we have sufficient staff in place to do so. That is the expectation I have of Eastern Health.

We are constantly recruiting LPNs and PCAs as well. We have recruited many, but there has also been attrition, which is a major challenge we are dealing with throughout the health system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: There are many initiatives being undertaken to recruit and retain staff. We are working with the Centre for Nursing Studies. We are working with Advanced Education and Skills. We are working with the College of the

North Atlantic. We have been recruiting internationally. We have many other efforts, including bursaries and other incentives in order to retain and attract staff. We will continue those efforts, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In all fairness, seven years to construct the facility and you did not have time to recruit people, put people in place for when the doors opened. Mr. Speaker, that is just not good enough for the people of this Province. Government is having a hard time finding workers at the facility because simply they did not plan during the construction period. Now we understand they are running the facility on overtime to fill the staffing vacancies.

I ask the Premier: You knew this issue was coming for years, why didn't you plan before you opened the facility?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the St. John's long-term care facility loses, on average, five employees a month due to turnover. We are talking about a facility that has 545 employees. There are many efforts being made to recruit and retain staff. To deal with this current situation, we have also opened fifteen additional beds at Chancellor Park.

We are constantly monitoring the wait-list. We are constantly working on the long-term care bed supply and we also have a detailed human-resources plan being developed to address some of the longer-term staffing needs. That human resource plan, that workforce plan, will be unveiled in the weeks ahead, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, when a child or youth is in the continuous custody of CYS, CYF is the sole guardian. They have the right to make all decisions regarding the child, including decisions around medical treatment and where they live. At sixteen, a youth can sign out of continuous custody, but government policy states that they cannot sign back in.

I ask the minister: Will you change this policy so youth who realize they have made a mistake about a critical life decision can have their continuous custody reinstated; doesn't everybody have a second chance?

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 can say to the member across the way, I give him an unequivocal word that that is not the case. Any youth who signs out of care can come back in with a youth services agreement.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I have spoken on this quite a few times here in the House of Assembly. A youth services agreement is a voluntary service; but again, if a youth comes out of the system, they are more than welcome to come back in. I will make sure there are no barriers whatsoever. If a youth wants to enter back into the system with youth services agreement, we are going to be there for them, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about vulnerable youth with complex needs. They very well may voluntarily choose to sign out of care, but they are being told – and we can confirm this – that they cannot sign back in. This is an unnecessarily harsh policy.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm that there are no barriers whatsoever – we are being told there are; can you confirm that there are none?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm again unequivocally that if a youth checks out of service, if you will, they can come back and sign back on with a voluntary youth services agreement, I can assure you.

Again, it gives me an opportunity to talk a little bit about the enhancements that we have made to that since 2011 since changing the legislation – the changes we have made to that legislation to be able to enhance it and services that we are able to provide. If given the opportunity, I would like to be able to talk a little bit about the umbrella of services that are available now to youth.

If they come out of that system, I can guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee the member across the way, they are eligible to come back in with youth services agreement. It is there, and again, I will do everything I can as minister in our department to support that youth.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister Responsible for Workplace, Health Safety and Compensation Commission said he had not heard from the Marystown Shipyard Families Alliance since April. They replied to him at 7:39 this morning. They were clear that making another trip to St. John's at their own expense was not possible and one of the Co-Chairs is ill and unable to travel. Despite these obstacles, they keep trying to get this government's attention.

I ask the minister: Will you show some compassion for these families and clear your schedule for a one-day trip to Marystown?

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 can confirm I did receive that email this morning and I can confirm I intend on replying to it. As I had said earlier, I responded to the initial email back on April 15. I was quite clear that I would meet with the group in St. John's, given the fact that I am in the House and performing duties in here. I can meet with them in the morning, afternoon, evening, whatever works best for them. If they are not able to come in here, certainly once the House closes and we have some time, I would be more than happy to go out there.

For the member to grandstand and say not compassionate is completely foolish. Let's get down to the facts. Let's leave the politics out of it. That is what I want to do.

When I sit down I want to sit down with the two ladies who emailed me. I do not need the member across the way advocating on their behalf. I am quite happy to hear their concerns because they are important, and I plan to hear them very soon.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I will let the people of Marystown decide who is being foolish and who is not.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said he would meet, as he just said, with the families alliance at any time, morning, noon, or night, as long as the House was closed and it did not interfere with his weekends. Well, Friday, May 29, is a weekday. The House is closed and he has to pass by the turnoff to Marystown to get to his district.

I ask the minister: Will you meet with the alliance at the Marystown Hotel at 2:00 p.m. next Friday?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not need the member across the way setting my schedule. I can assure you, as I can assure the good folks in Marystown and particularly this alliance – I can assure them I am certainly willing to meet with them.

Again, I am not sure why this is even here and why we are making politics of it. I know the member inserts himself in this each and every time he can for grandstanding purposes. I do not set your schedule when you go and charge off to the taxpayers when you attend a dinner at the Good Shepherd. You do not set my schedule, and I will meet with the members.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, as the minister indicates that he only performs his ministerial duties four days a week with Fridays and weekends off, I ask the Premier: Will you direct the minister to meet with the families alliance in Marystown, or will you do it yourself?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, while the member across the way does not understand what ministerial duties require and being a rural MHA and a person with a young family, I

certainly balance all of those quite well. I can assure you my constituents are very happy. The people I represent in my department are very happy.

I have committed to him and I have said – I do not know why we are speaking about this now – I have committed to meet with the group. I will do so at the earliest possible opportunity to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I have another question for the minister. I just came into some information relating to the questions and I felt it pertinent to get it out now.

I have been told that the minister talked about a youth services agreement that a young can sign back into, but my question was about continuous custody, which they cannot sign back into, which makes CYFS their guardian. They cannot sign back into that.

I ask the minister again: Can you confirm in this House that this is indeed the case?

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 am happy to say that we have actually extended that continuous custody from the age of sixteen to eighteen. By its very nature and by the very name, it is continuous custody. So if you were in that as a child, you would progress on through and after the age of sixteen, you would be allowed to stay within that service.

If you check yourself out voluntarily, you may again, as I had stated earlier, you may voluntarily re-enter the program again with the youth services agreement.

I am not sure how much clearer I can be, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, you can sign out voluntarily of continuous custody, but you cannot sign back into continuous custody. You cannot do that.

Again, I ask the minister: Are you saying to this House that is that case? You said the youth services agreement, but continuous custody is the question here. I ask you again. There is a difference.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: There absolutely is a difference, Mr. Speaker, and he just elaborated – he just answered his own question, continuous custody. You are in the program as a child. You transition over after the age of sixteen. You are in continuous custody. There is no break in service.

If you voluntarily check yourself out of that continuous custody, you are able – as I had said, no barriers – to re-enter again under the youth services agreement.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. S. COLLINS: If the member would allow me to finish, I am happy to stand on my feet and answer his question another ten times because I would like to be able to talk about the enhancements we made back in 2011 and how that is serving the youth of the Province.

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 tabled overinflated forestry job numbers in the House. Given that your own government department stated in 2008, before paper mill and saw mill shut downs, there were only 300 value-added forestry jobs.

I ask the minister: Why are you inaccurately stating there are more than 1,000 direct value-added jobs today?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure of the line of questioning, whether he is questioning the good people at my department or not who work through the numbers as he requested.

The pulp and paper sector – as the numbers were presented here in the House of Assembly – direct 534, indirect and induced 534; sawmilling, 210; value-added, 1,075; harvesting, 720, with indirect and induced at 720, for a total of 2,539; plus the additional 450 government employees who work in the forest sector in the Province, Mr. Speaker, adds up to the total presented in the House.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Three thousand indirect and induced jobs are five times the number as what government purported in 2008.

Mr. Speaker, in April, 2013, Dr. Wade Locke delivered a presentation on resources and Newfoundland and Labrador's future at Grenfell Campus. Dr. Locke's job numbers for forestry, logging, and paper manufacturing state more than a 2,000 job loss since 2005, with just over 1,000 direct jobs in 2012. This more accurately reflects today's direct employment.

I ask the minister: Is your government endorsed economist, Dr. Wade Locke, wrong on his numbers or are you?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to stand in this House and criticize or evaluate the good work of either people inside government or anyone on the outside of government, whether you are a public servant or not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely appalling that a member opposite would actually criticize either people inside government or people outside government. I genuinely presented the numbers that were presented to me through my department with regard to the number of people directly, indirectly, and induced, Mr. Speaker, in the forestry industry of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Picture our award winning tourism ads, Mr. Speaker, pristine fields of dandelions, large icebergs, and clothes hanging on the clothesline, a positive image to the people of the world. Mr. Speaker, picture this, miles of debris, large household items in ditches, garbage blowing in the wind, all on the route from the airport. Last year, Transportation and Works cleaned up the Outer Ring Road on June 29 while thousands of visitors were arriving at the airport.

I ask the minister: Will you commit to an earlier cleanup of the Outer Ring Road this year so our visitors' first impression is the same positive impression they see from our tourism ads?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member must have listened to the two interviews I gave this morning. One with Cecil Hare at CBS, and one with VOXM, where I noted and outlined that the cleanup for the Outer Ring Road will proceed this year on Sunday, June 14. The posted signs will go up in the next number of days telling people.

We will be doing our public announcements, Mr. Speaker. We have to mobilize almost forty staff. This is a cost to the taxpayers, but a valuable cost, to show that we have a clean, viable Province here and at the Outer Ring Road.

We are also working very closely with the City of St. John's to ensure that we eliminate this type of debris being on our highways, Mr. Speaker. Phase I will happen on June 14, ahead of the time frame, and the following will happen a couple of weeks later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

Staffing is so tight at the St. John's Long-Term Care Facility that annual leave for staff may be denied over the summer. There are not enough temporary call-in staff available to fill positions.

I ask the Premier: What is government's plan to deal with this current situation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the member opposite would know, staffing is always a challenge summertime in any government department whether it is education, health, or within the Confederation Building here or otherwise. We are committed, as we always are, to work with our Department of Human Resources, through all departments, particularly with Eastern Health, to make sure we do our best to accommodate employees and ensure vacation time is provided, but at the same time that important positions are always staffed appropriately.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We know we have a complex situation over there. It is already understaffed, beds are closed, there is a waiting time and now the staff are not going to get a summer break.

Mr. Speaker, in Estimates the minister noted new staff are being recruited but he also said existing staff are leaving at such a rate that they cannot open a new ward.

I ask the Premier: Why are staff leaving the St. John's Long-Term Care Facility?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier today in Question Period, attrition is a reality throughout the public service. It is a reality in any organization. The St. John's Long-Term Care Facility loses on average five employees a

month due to staff turnover. We are talking about a facility with 545 positions.

That said, Mr. Speaker, we are constantly working to recruit and retain the staff we need, particularly licensed practical nurses and personal care attendants. We have solid human resource plans in place. We have opened up additional beds at Chancellor Park, and we know the member opposite does not support that. We are undertaking a number of other initiatives as well, Mr. Speaker, including international recruitment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, this morning I attended a meeting with housing advocates who desperately need housing for supportive housing projects. They would know how to use the assets of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to address some of our growing housing crisis.

I ask the minister: Has he consulted with municipalities, housing advocates, seniors groups, community groups working with homelessness, or even considered the recommendations of the OrgCode report before deciding to sell Newfoundland and Labrador Housing assets?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the member opposite and Members of the House of Assembly, that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing actually does a considerable amount of consultation in partnership with community groups and organizations, Mr. Speaker. They have a very strong network that they work with throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

They partner with members of industry and business who have a desire to make improvements to housing opportunities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. They also regularly consult with the on-the-ground

organizations that are very close, and housing is very important to them, Mr. Speaker.

They do a good job, Mr. Speaker, over at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We are proud of the work they do. They continue to do good work and provide good opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, that is not what I am hearing from the groups regarding consultation of the sale of assets belonging to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

I ask the minister: Why would he sell Newfoundland and Labrador Housing assets that belong to the people before he even has a comprehensive provincial housing strategy or plan?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of projects and plans that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing are engaged with at any given time. They are very broad. They vary greatly throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and they have different opportunities and different programs and services.

They have some that are about land assembly, land development, land development opportunities to partner with private business. Mr. Speaker, they also partner with private business in the development and growth of housing that is affordable for those who need those types of housing. So they have a broad range.

They have a strong network with community groups and organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I know for a fact they talk to those groups on a regular basis. They engage with them on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker, and they do that throughout the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to assist providers to ensure the Town of Goose Cove is a recipient

of broadband Internet services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by all residents of Goose Cove. It is an important matter for them, and something that, when it comes to the internet, I have been speaking with providers. They are very interested in providing the service, but there are cost barriers to making sure of the infrastructure.

So I would hope that in the broadband program, the money that is carried over, that should a positive proposal be put forward and we can lever the right partnerships, we can get this done for the people of Goose Cove – that is just a few kilometres outside of the Town of St. Anthony – to build a stronger region when it comes to new business opportunities and economic development, and housing starts and growth in that town.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Also making the opportunity for municipalities to do the work in business. We see more things are going online all the time when it comes to the services and being able to commute and share what a municipality is doing with its residents.

We have seen where this government has provided funding to various communities across the Province – and there are still well over 100 communities without broadband internet. This is a town, a town that is incorporated, that is not an exponential cost, it should be provided –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – to the eighty-four households of Goose Cove so we can see opportunities and give people equal opportunity and access to important telecommunications services that are needed, that are needed to build a prosperous economy and community.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I have presented this petition, and I am sure it will not be the last time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

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

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

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

WHEREAS privatized nursing homes lower operating costs by paying lower wages, de-unionizing, laying people off, and cutting staff in these facilities; and

WHEREAS studies have established that for-profit nursing homes are associated with lower quality of services and poorer resident health outcomes, including an increased risk of hospitalization; and

WHEREAS Auditors General of the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario have reported that P3s cost taxpayers more;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately stop the privatization of long-term care.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand and represent the voices of people from Grand Falls, Port au Port, Port Leamington, Botwood, other places here – Bishop’s Falls, Grand Falls again, Springdale, Birchy Bay, people in the Province who are quite concerned about the new direction that this government is going in with regard to long-term care.

What is very disturbing is that this government seems to be ignoring what has happened in other parts of Canada when long-term care has become part of public-private partnerships. A

lovely word that “partnerships,” it makes it sound very nice and something very good to do, but we know that every P3 hospital in Ontario has experienced huge cost overruns and all the financial information has been hidden from the public. In North Bay in Sault Ste. Marie, the hospitals have more than doubled in capital costs alone, these P3 hospitals.

The rumors in Niagara are that the hospital cost has increased dramatically, though nothing is public yet, and this word comes from a report that has been done.

Mr. Speaker, the experiences out there in this country, and in Europe and in the UK, are showing us that P3s cost more money. They do not give the same level of services. They create fewer staff because the bottom line for P3s is making a profit, and we cannot have profit making being done on the backs of our people who need long-term care.

The people who are signing these petitions and sending them in to me know what they are talking about, because they know what is happening in other parts of the country. They are asking this government to pay attention and to not take the direction that is being talked about by them, a direction that is talked about by their Premier and the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, standing on a point of order?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Prior to the petition that was just –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: Prior to the petition that was just read there was some back and forth between the sides and a comment was made by the Member for Terra Nova that there were bigots on the other side, and that the other side should get their bigots in order. Now, I believe

there was a ruling made in this House on Tuesday and yesterday about unparliamentary language, and I would say that such language, according to Bosc and O'Brien page 618, is offensive, provocative, and insulting.

I would ask the member to withdraw the commentary, to apologize, and to refrain from such comments in this House.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker did not hear such commentary. I will take time over the next day or so to look at Hansard, to review the webcast, and to see if there is any evidence to back up the member's claim.

Further petitions?

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS most communities in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair do not have adequate broadband service; and

WHEREAS residents, businesses, students, nurses, and teachers rely heavily on the Internet to conduct their work and cannot afford to wait until 2016 or later to access a potential plan in partnership with the Muskrat Falls development; and

WHEREAS there are a number of world-class tourism sites in the region, including UNESCO site at Red Bay, Battle Harbour Historic Site, and the Mealy Mountains National Park;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: – to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: – to provide adequate broadband services to communities along the Labrador Coast.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, many times I have stood on my feet and brought forward petitions on broadband issues on behalf of the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and every day I get new emails.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: Every day I get new emails of frustration with the broadband issues that is crippling tourism in the district, that is crippling business use in the district, and that is absolutely almost of no use to the people who reside in the area, Mr. Speaker. In the Labrador Straits we have seen recent improvements, but down in Southeast it continues to be atrocious.

The town of St. Lewis, Mr. Speaker, told me this morning in an email their speed was 0.06. Even the service provider said a bare minimum should be 0.79. The Town of St. Lewis said it took a half a day to download emails. I understand their frustration because when I am home in the district, most of the time I cannot even access my own email. I would not dream of trying to download or do work, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very serious problem for the region. It is a problem for tourism. It is a problem for businesses that cannot even use a basic Interac machine, Mr. Speaker. It is a problem for the professionals there who are trying to further and advance their education through online courses and things like that.

Mr. Speaker, a bare minimum for high-speed Internet should be 1.5 megabytes per second is my understanding. We are nowhere near that in

the area. I understand that there is a new updated proposal with new figures that the provider has submitted to the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Province to work with the feds and the service provider to try and bring the residents in southeast, in those five or six communities, up to where they need to be with the rest of the Province. In this technological age of 2015, we should not be stuck where we cannot even send and receive a basic email.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have brought this petition forward on several occasions. I would first like to point out I am not criticizing in any way the work that the RNC currently do in the Town of

Conception Bay South. They approach their jobs in a very professional manner. I feel the issue here is tied more to the degree of policing, perception of residents, and the visibility of police in the community.

Mr. Speaker, this petition came about from two points of focus. First of all, there is a major concern in the district regarding speeding and dangerous driving. Route 60 and the Foxtrap Access Road are provincial highways, major highways running through the town. On those highways we have eight schools with students walking 1.6 kilometres on each of those highways, to each of those eight schools.

Recently, Mayor McDonald also expressed concerns about safety on the Conception Bay South Bypass Road as a result of several accidents over a couple of week period. This is not only a concern on major highways. It is also a concern on residential streets. Our deputy mayor recently said speeding and dangerous driving are currently the biggest issues we have to deal with in our town.

Mr. Speaker, recently a Facebook group has come forward expressing concerns about this. I dealt with it as a ward councillor. I dealt with it in the area of the Minister of Justice's street. He is certainly aware of it.

Mr. Speaker, at one point in time the RNC had a neighbourhood policing office in the Town of Conception Bay South. This has been phased out since 2013 and has not been replaced.

The Minister of Justice will tell us that the model of neighborhood policing is no longer the model of the RNC and that the RNC are now basing their policing as an intelligence-based policing. This may well be the case, Mr. Speaker, but residents are clearly concerned that they do not see a regular police presence in their neighborhoods.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition to present on health care in the Heatherton to Highlands area.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition I presented to this House a number of times before. I continue to receive petitions and I will continue to present them to this House until this situation is looked after because it is a very serious situation when people in an area do not have access to the basic services of a doctor or nurse practitioner.

The primary care is not just there, Mr. Speaker, in these communities. It causes all kinds of problems. People have trouble getting to see a doctor. They have to travel long distances to get in to see a doctor. They have to wait in emergency rooms, usually all day.

They do not have a consistency of care. They have locums who visit the community every couple of weeks or so for a few days. They do not have a consistency of care, which is necessary for good health. The doctors they are seeing do not know their history, so they are not giving them the type of care people deserve.

I am disappointed a doctor or nurse practitioner has not been found for this clinic in Jeffrey's. The petition says the situation has gone on for over a year, but it is my understanding a doctor has not been there for about a year-and-a-half now, Mr. Speaker.

A similar situation exists in St. George's as well. The doctor has been gone there for about half a year now. It causes problems throughout the system, not just to the people in those areas but also to people who have emergencies who are going to the hospital in Stephenville. They cannot get in. They have to wait longer times because they have people – thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time to present this petition.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Motion 7, pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House will not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Thursday, May 21, 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: I further move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Motion 8, pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today, Thursday, May 21, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today and furthermore that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to call Motion 1, that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

MR. SPEAKER: Resuming debate on the Budget Speech, the amendment.

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

MR. FLYNN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The last time I stood here I talked about the broken promises, I guess, of the people of the Corner Brook area. I may get an opportunity the next time I stand here to speak to that, but today I would like to speak to the House on my critic role, which is tourism. I feel I have some knowledge of that, having served in the industry for nearly forty years. As we get into July, it will be forty years since I entered the tourism industry and I feel I have some sense of where this industry has gone.

Again, having served as President of Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Cruise Association for a number of years, I have certainly seen some very positive activity within the industry. I congratulate, not only this government on that growth, but governments past because we have come a long way to the industry.

Being from the West Coast, I always felt – and my decision to move there, one of the main reasons why we went there is that we had actually four seasons, unlike many other areas of the Province. I was very happy with that and I think we have some great product. When I look at Marble Mountain and the opportunities that we have there, when I look at Gros Morne and the opportunities we have there – although it would not hurt for some of the mainland companies to actually get our geography straight, but that is an issue that we raised earlier this week.

I think why I stand here today and talk about why tourism matters; tourism spending in

Newfoundland is a \$1.1 billion industry which is spread out right across the Province annually. This is particularly important to rural parts of the Province. Because of the lack of opportunities, this is one of the brighter signs that we have.

Currently, tourism supports 8 per cent of the provincial jobs. The demand is actually outpacing the supply. There are more than 2,400 tourism businesses located right throughout the Province. Representing 83 per cent of these businesses are small- and medium-sized businesses.

In recent years, job growth in tourism has outpaced job growth in Newfoundland and Labrador overall with a 41 per cent growth in average hourly compensation in the tourism occupation since 2008. There is no doubt tourism helps preserve Newfoundland and Labrador's unique culture, heritage, and indeed history. Equally as important, it helps grow the economic opportunities of our rural communities.

Now, I have to congratulate the industry and government. We heard all of the comments over the past week about all of the negative things the government has done. Well, I want to congratulate them on a number of opportunities throughout this speech, because I think they are worth bringing up.

When the government looked at Vision 2020 and where industry and government would like to see this industry go and where it would like to be by the year 2020, that was an important part of the planning for the growth of the tourism industry. I think it is worthwhile to point out that there were three prime focuses in that growth: one was the tourism strategy for the Province overall; the other one of course, which is very important, access to the Province and the transportation challenges that we have; and, indeed some of the regulatory issues that we have within the industry.

I would like to briefly touch on two of those as we go through. I think I have already spoke about and complimented government to have the vision – and industry, because we are there with the people. I would like to touch on two important areas: the access and transportation and regulatory. There are a number of key focus

areas that we have got to concentrate on in access and transportation and the regulatory issues. I will get into them as I hit onto each one.

I would also like to compliment the industry, who has had a tourism marketing council, along with government, and the great ads that they have taken across this country and promoted what I believe is the best Province in Canada. Even with the challenges we face today, Mr. Speaker, these are great opportunities to promote this Province. There are things that actually work here in the Province. I would truly like to congratulate the staff, many of them who have been my friends over the past forty years and have given me advice. They have done a great job.

So, as we get out across the Province, it would be nice, I will admit, to see more of my area promoted in these ads – but we will give it time, and hopefully people will speak up, see the value of all the product that is indeed on the West Coast, and particularly in Humber East.

I would like to congratulate the business sector for all of the investments that they have made over the years into the tourism industry. They have stepped up to the plate, and over the past fifteen years we have seen the service level of this industry grow substantially, and the number of star ratings for hotels as we go across the Province, have generally increased by 50 per cent. So something is working.

Then when we see the advertising budget for the Province for this year, the money is put back to the 2013 levels that were promised by government. So \$15 million is what the advertising budget is. So I guess now I will take on my role as critic, because it is important to point out while that increase was great, and you did promise industry that, and it is nice to have some direction where to go, I think it is important to point out that we are still below 2013 level – because basically the rate of inflation has cut into that budget by about \$1 million since its inception. In actual fact, we are still working with less money in 2015 than we had in 2013.

The last numbers that I saw – and I will round these figures off here – we have basically put

\$15 million into our advertising budget; this is an investment for a rate of return. The Province is actually bringing back, as a result of that \$15 million investment, about \$140 million in taxes. That is significant, so we should never look at cutting that budget back because it is a great return on investment, and I am sure if the Province could only invest in other infrastructures and other projects like that we would not be in the position we are today. Indeed, it is nice to see that budget brought back to its 2013 levels, but we are still weak on the amount of money that we have there compared to other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, today, just before coming into the House, we have another letter from the outfitters. I think that is important to point that out here today because government got to have an understanding of the tourism industry and, for that matter, any industry. Because before we can make policies that actually affect industry, it is important that we consult with them, that we plan ahead; but obviously, with the rate increase this year of the big game licences, this has been probably the most significant negative effect – I know it was important to raise money for the Budget, but we cannot jeopardize the 500 or 600 jobs that are there in the big game industry because of the greed of government.

Really, I wonder sometimes if the left hand knew what the right hand was doing when they were actually raising this tax on the operators throughout the Province. A 50 per cent increase is hard for any small business to be able to absorb. Contrary to what the minister has said, that means your salary for that year. So we are expecting some of these owners not to have an income for that year because of errors that I believe this government has made by raising that fee so much. I would be happy to share with the minister some of the letters we have had come in about the negative effect this is having on their industry.

Unfortunately, and I know we have debated this a number of times, when I go out in 2014 and sell my packages, I cannot foresee that there is going to be a 50 per cent increase by government in the charge they are making to the industry people. So they have no way now of collecting that money. They are not big

corporations. They cannot absorb that kind of hit in their pocket.

I am basically saying to the minister, reconsider the action you have taken because this is certainly one area that will be a detriment to the outfitting industry in this Province. I am afraid that not all businesses are going to be able to survive what I call a reckless, unannounced, with no consultation, increases into this area. Really, it shows not strong leadership, but it really shows the lack of leadership this government had in doing that.

Now I am going to refer to another, what I call, blunder. Again, not showing strong leadership. You had a provincial booklet that went out to the public with 30 per cent of the businesses left out. Mr. Speaker, surely someone must have realized that we cannot send out booklets with 30 per cent and 40 per cent of businesses not listed. Someone should have recognized there was something wrong when that happened.

Having been a small operator for nearly forty years, as I said earlier, when I am into January and February and March, I am wondering how I am going to pay the bills and make it to the summer season. As a result, as operator I might have been mopping the floor. Guess what? I might have been in the kitchen cooking and I might have had to clean the toilets. Yet, we have to pay these bills. These are just part of the job description of a small business in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and probably in Canada, but I will not profess to speak about the rest of Canada because I do not know.

While the operator is at fault to some degree, sometimes we have to say, do you know what? We have to go back and check this again because there is something wrong. In this case, there is definitely something wrong when you had 30 per cent of the businesses left out of the provincial travel guide. It is jeopardizing the tourism product in the Province and it is also jeopardizing the tourism businesses in this Province.

Many parts of this Province, Mr. Speaker, particularly the rural parts of the Province, have a short season and trying to recover from being left out the travel guide, it is absolutely ridiculous. I really find it hard to comprehend

that government could not catch that before these booklets went out.

I know my time is running out and I am not going to have time to go through all the notes I had here, but I would like to briefly touch on the Marine Atlantic issue, Mr. Speaker, because since 2002 we have seen these numbers drop by 35 per cent. This is important for the people of the West Coast. It demonstrates, if you look at the occupancy rates on the West Coast because they are seeing significant – well, they are seeing decreases in the numbers over the years.

Marine Atlantic plays a vital role to the development of the tourism industry. What is our strategy? This is where I would like to refer back to government's committee and industry's committee when they spoke on the access to information. I am just going to read a passage out of this.

“Access and transportation continues to be a major strategic priority for the growth of the tourism industry. Travel to, from, and around the province, whether by sea, air, or road is often inhibited by issues of affordability, capacity, infrastructure and quality. Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism industry depends on an accessible, affordable and reliable transportation system in order to grow and government must establish a comprehensive multi-modal transportation strategy that will ensure a reliable, affordable and efficient system that can meet the evolving needs of the users.”

Some key areas where they suggested we focus is obviously a strategy for Marine Atlantic. Mr. Speaker, we do not have a strategy for Marine Atlantic. We had two letters in the past year, according to the minister – maybe it was three, I stand to be corrected. We have two letters that have been sent to Ottawa. That is not a great strategy when you are dealing with one of the key pieces of infrastructure, not only to get tourists to this Province but, indeed, the economic growth of the Province.

We do not have a relationship with Ottawa that we can actually do anything about it. We have turned our back to Ottawa. Really, Mr. Speaker, in such a key area, this Province should be discussing with Ottawa these very, very important issues.

It is fine to point your finger at their federal counterparts but we have to show, in my opinion, what we are doing in return. Two letters, in my view, just does not cut it. Having tourism businesses on the West Coast, talking to operators on the West Coast, it is really disturbing to see there is such beauty, there is so much nature there, and to see these opportunities being missed by a lack of co-operation with the federal government.

The other issue I wanted to raise – we have, over the past number of years, cut the officers across the Province. I would just like to read from, again, the industry and government paper on this because I think it is important. This is in the regulatory issue here.

“Small and medium-sized businesses are not only the backbone of the tourism industry, but also the backbone of the economy. As such, it is essential that the federal, provincial and municipal regulatory requirements and processes are flexible, straightforward and eliminate unnecessary red tape in order to facilitate business growth and development. For businesses to successfully operate in a supportive and innovative environment, a concerted effort must be made to ensure legislation is effective and enforced.”

It says three key areas that we have to concentrate on, and I am going to read all three of them out. “Ensure Room Levies are industry led, focused and managed.” Of course, Mr. Speaker, with a 2 per cent raise now that this government has decided to introduce, to expect a room levy at this point in time would be ludicrous, and obviously it cannot be done.

My time is running out here, so I am going to get to the other one. This one is an important one, and I am going to be taking this up a little bit later. “Ensure equal-playing field through the enforcement of the Tourism Establishment Act and Regulations, specifically targeting unlicensed accommodations throughout the province.” The third one is to protect our natural resources.

These are all key pieces of material that we as a Province, and I think as this provincial government, has failed to act upon. They have been sitting on it and I could go on to others,

including the tourism signage across our highway and so on. There are lots of areas where I can give credit, but I think it is important to point out what has not been done, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the Budget debate here this afternoon. The Member for Humber East spoke a little bit about tourism. I am going to respond to that before I get into my notes. It has some relativity to my Department of Environment and Conservation. He talked a little bit about the outfitters and the fees. So let me just speak to that just to clear the air.

Mr. Speaker, I actually as a young man worked for a couple of years in an outfitting camp. I have some knowledge about how these camps operate. I certainly did not work on it from the business side of the operation, but did certainly understand and have huge empathy and understanding of what happens in these camps on a day-to-day basis.

I spent two full summers on a salmon river and I understand some of the challenges that outfitters face when you are trying to bring in from the mainland, trying to provide a product that you can sell and book in advance. So I totally get it; I totally understand that. I have spoken to the outfitter organizations and individuals in the last little while and I understand their concerns about the fee increases.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the fiscal realities of where we find ourselves right now – and I will get into that a bit further about why we are here right now with our fiscal reality – we have to find ways to face that and deal with that. To be responsible, we have to do it in responsible ways.

Mr. Speaker, nobody likes to increase fees. Nobody likes to do that, but we looked at fees across the board. Every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has seen some kind of impact on their lives to a degree, whether it is Motor Vehicle Registration, which I am responsible for with Service NL, or increases in your fishing licence, or small game licence, or your moose licences. People have been impacted in the Province as well.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at when we are talking about outfitters and increasing those fees by 50 per cent, yes, it seems to be a little bit much. When we looked at other jurisdictions and we looked at what was being charged in other jurisdictions for people who are not from here, who come from away to come and hunt a resource that we spend millions of dollars a year to maintain, to enhance, to make sure that it is sustainable, we think it was only fair that we could get those fees up to a level that is comparable to other jurisdictions.

Even then, Mr. Speaker, there is no way we will ever be able to recoup the investments that we make into that. It is investments that we make on behalf of the people of the Province to make sure that outfitters do have a product, they do have a resource that they can sell, and a product they can sell to people who come from away.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the outfitting operators a little while ago; I committed to them that we would try to find a way to help them with this new burden. There are ways that they can pass these fees on. Some outfitters – if you go online – they will charge their set rates for the run of a week, or a four or five-day hunt that are set rates, with licence fees separate from that. So you would have a separate fee over here and if that fee changes well, that is what you paid. It says right on your licence when you buy it from the government, it is right there.

Those outfitters will not be impacted, but the majority of outfitters do have that all-inclusive package. I recognize that and I do get that, and they do sell packages in advance. How do outfitters respond to changes in the economy, changes to their business? They have a business model that obviously has some flexibility to find

efficiencies and how they operate or to pick it up in the following year.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, if the cost of labour goes up, or the cost of fuel goes up, or the cost of insurance goes up and they have already got their packages pre-sold, well, obviously there is going to be an impact in their business. Being a businessman myself, in my former life, what you would do is find a way to pick it up the next year. So if you have a few dollars that are lost this year, you would find a way to pick it up next year.

What we have achieved and what we have done, Mr. Speaker, is talked to the Outfitters Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and we came to terms – this is just out there now; we just sent a letter earlier this week – and we are going to allow them to pay for the licences that they secure from Wildlife and Conservation, that they secure from us, pay them in 2016. By January 31, 2016, they will be able to pay for the licences. Mr. Speaker, they can now start selling their packages today for 2016-2017 going forward and they can raise their rates to a level where they can recoup what the rate increases were for this year and years going forward and, in fact, find ways to put more money in their pocket.

Most of these hunts, Mr. Speaker, when you look at moose and the rate – a moose hunt now is about \$500; I do not have the figures here in front of me for a fee from us. They charge up to between \$4,000, \$7,000, \$8,000, \$9,000 and \$10,000 for a five, six, or seven-day hunt. It depends on what kind of hunt it is going to be. If it is remote and you have to fly in, if you are using a helicopter and you have to get there, success rates of the camp, different elements of the experience, you can charge up to \$7,000, \$8,000, \$9,000 or \$10,000.

Well, if you charge a 5 per cent fee, you can pick up that \$175, which is double the fee on top of what you are paying there now for the moose alone, in one year and even more so, Mr. Speaker. So what we are offering here is something, I think, is palatable. I think it is something that the outfitters of Newfoundland and Labrador will receive very warmly.

When you look at caribou, the caribou licences now are gone up to around \$700 – gone up 50 per cent. Newfoundland, insular Newfoundland, is the only place in North America, and perhaps the world, where you can hunt caribou. Caribou here are trophy caribou. They are charging anywhere from \$6,000 and \$7,000 and \$8,000 up to \$10,000 and \$12,000 for a hunt for caribou. It is a valuable resource. Almost 50 per cent of the licences that we give out for caribou are given out to the outfitting industry. So Newfoundlanders and Labradorians only get access to half the resource that we are able to harvest. So, Mr. Speaker, we have been taking outfitting concerns into perspective, into consideration when we are making these decisions.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, there are ways that outfitting can recoup those monies. Just like any other business has to recoup their monies when they see fee increases or insurance goes up, or the cost of labour goes up or the cost of fuel goes up, or the cost of food goes up. I think we have been very responsible.

Certainly, what I have committed to do with the outfitting association is to keep the lines of communication open, to meet on a more regular basis to better understand their industry and their wants and needs, because they are the experts. We totally get that. We want to be partners with them. We want to continue to make sure the resource is sustainable, the resource they are offering to people that come from away. It is an important piece of business for our Province.

Mr. Speaker, the commitment is there. We will continue to work hard to make sure that the outfitting of the Province are viable, that there is a resource there they can access, and that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will support them in every way they can.

I just want to talk a little bit about the Budget and where we are today. I hear on the other side on many occasions, they talk about what happened to the money, what happened to the oil money. I have talked to several people about that because it does resonate out there. People have a legitimate right to ask that question. It is money that goes into this Province from the offshore and royalties and other benefits as well. We have seen significant economic growth over

the last ten years and significant dollars come into the coffers here, Mr. Speaker.

The money that we got out of the oil patch was investments that were made right here in this Province. We did not take that money and just throw it away. We invested in many things, and you could add it up pretty quickly where the money went.

Just a few buckets that I can mention here now will attribute for a vast majority of the revenues that we took from the offshore. We spent over \$6 billion in infrastructure in this Province in the last ten years. Almost \$6.6 billion, I think if the numbers are correct. New and renovated schools, new health care facilities, upgraded road infrastructure, and new and enhanced municipal infrastructure. In my district alone, we have a new high school. It is a \$40 million high school that is going to open up this September. Mr. Speaker, it is a significant investment in my district. It is long in coming.

The Convention Centre here in the city is another \$30 million. You look around this Province or you look around this city, which I am a member who represents the west end of St. John's; it is incredible what we have seen in the city from investments made by this government. We are talking about \$6 billion there.

When you look at other ways we have used that money, Mr. Speaker, we decreased taxes, we decreased fees up to – the accumulative effect over the last ten years is \$3 billion; \$3 billion that is in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that they spent to continue to grow this economy, that they continue to create jobs if they are small business people, and that is \$3 billion. Right there, that is \$9.6 billion that we are talking and counting, and counting.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at what we paid down on our debt. We paid \$3.4 billion down on our debt. We did that four years ago; five years ago, I believe it was. We are up to \$12 billion, almost \$13 billion in that math alone. We are at \$13 billion before we start talking about other investments we made in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

If we look at the public service, if we look at the people of the Province, the people who work for

the people of the Province, people who do the work day in and day out, the cumulative effect over the last ten years, a 30 per cent salary increase. We have hired on more people, absolutely. We hear it when we hear the Opposition say perhaps we have too many people working for government. I am not ready to go there yet and talk about and debate that, but here we are.

Mr. Speaker, if you add up the money, 60 per cent of all the money that government spends is on salaries. If you look at the cumulative effect of 30 per cent salary increases and the people we just hired, we are up to \$2 billion or \$3 billion there. We are up to like \$16 billion, \$17 billion in four buckets that I just talked about. Where did the oil money go? Mr. Speaker, it is right there in front of us.

When the Opposition say we have wasted that money, Mr. Speaker, nothing is further from the truth. We have made smart investments. We invested in the people of the Province. We invested in our public service. We expanded our programs, we expanded our services. We invested in education and health care. We invested in aquaculture, Mr. Speaker. There are so many other areas we invested money, and we did it very wisely. We have helped to diversify this economy, and we have also invested in Nalcor.

Let's talk about Nalcor just for a minute. Nalcor, the Opposition over there, they make it like they are the big, bad guys; they are the big, bad boogeymen or something. They are something we should be ashamed of, something that should not exist.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the Province own that company. It is the people's energy company. This company is something we are investing in that is going to pay us back for generations to come, for years and years to come through Muskrat Falls. Yes, we spent money out of revenues from oil to invest in Muskrat Falls. We took that money and not only invested in Muskrat Falls, we invested in oil and gas projects, but a large amount of that money did go into Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker.

Nalcor is going to be self-sufficient by 2017. What is that going to mean for the people of the

Province? In 2017, they are going to start paying money back in. They are going to pay off the \$3 billion that was going to be invested into that company by oil money, by money that we have borrowed. That money is going to be paid off by 2025.

So, by 2025 we are going to pay off that \$3 billion. Every year after that there is going to be a minimum of a billion-plus dollars that is going to go into the coffers of this government, of the people of the Province, of the companies they own. We will make a decision on how that money is going to be spent. We will make a decision on roads and health care and education and Memorial University, and maybe that day will come when we will have free tuition and the place that we would like to get to.

Nalcor is going to be a big piece of that. It is a visionary piece of what we have done as a government. For anybody to stand up and say that is a waste of money, Mr. Speaker, they are talking through their hat. They are not speaking the truth. They do not understand how it works.

Mr. Speaker, by 2041, we are going to take over Churchill Falls – us, the people of the Province. Surely, we should own that resource right now fully. So, over a billion dollars a year Quebec Hydro is getting from Churchill Falls. By 2041, that number is probably going to be, what, \$2 billion, \$3 billion a year?

Mr. Speaker, 2041, my children – I am fifty-two now. My two oldest daughters are going to be the same age as I am right now, the same age as I am. They are going to be fifty-two years old when we take that over.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. CRUMMELL: Yes, and I am fifty-two. I feel like I am thirty-two, I feel like I am forty-two. I feel like I still have a long time to live yet. I am going to have grandchildren, hopefully, by then.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. CRUMMELL: Okay, I am not quite thirty-two or forty-two.

Mr. Speaker, the point being, it is in their lifetime that they are going to see this. We are going to have billions of dollars coming in from hydroelectricity resources. We have diversified our economy by bringing revenue from other streams. Nalcor is going to do that. That is exactly what Nalcor is going to do. That is exactly what Hydro is going to do.

We have the Upper Churchill, we have the Lower Churchill, and we have Gull Island. Mr. Speaker, we would be crazy not to invest in that in the next five to ten years when we get ourselves in a better spot, when oil prices go back up again. We need to go there. It is one of the last green energy reserves in North America. North America is hungry for green energy, hungry as can be.

Mr. Speaker, if we can get to that point into our future where we have Churchill Falls, we have Muskrat Falls, and we have Gull Island humming along creating revenue for the people of the Province, we are still going to be out there investing into the oil. The oil business is not ending tomorrow or the next day. We are finding new reserves all the time.

Listen, a hundred years from now, I mean yes, things are changing. Fossil fuels, we are going to be burning less and less as time goes on. The population of the world is expanding. The need for fossil fuels is not going to go away in the next hundred years, Mr. Speaker, and that is a fact of reality. It is still going to be needed.

We are still going to invest into exploration. We are still going to invest into extraction. Mr. Speaker, natural gas, where is that going to be ten years from now? Eventually we are going to get to a point where we are going to be able to monetize that. Eventually we are going to get to the point that we are going to be able to make money off that.

The oil companies and the gas companies that are the experts in this field, Mr. Speaker, are going to reach that point and they are going to do the business case that says now is the time to extract that natural gas off our shores and monetize it. That day will happen; I am sure of that. It probably will happen in my lifetime and I hope it does, but do you know what? It will

surely happen in my daughter's and my son's lifetime, and their children's lifetime.

We are a natural energy warehouse. It is what we are, Newfoundland and Labrador. We have our fishery, we have our timber, we have our natural resources, and we have our environment that tourists like to come and see and enjoy. We have all that. So the diversification of our economy is important, Mr. Speaker, but our ground root revenue stream is going to be natural resources I think forever and a day. That is not going to change. We are a small population in the Northeast Atlantic that has resources that are still yet to be found. Mining is going to play a big role as well.

So Nalcor, again, is not the big bogeyman. Nalcor should be a big brother to us. We should be making sure that the company has all the resources it needs to be as successful as it can be because, Mr. Speaker, that is the answer to our future. What we are doing there is exactly visionary. That is what you call visionary.

So the people out there who are saying it should not happen, Muskrat Falls should not happen, well, what would you have done? How would you replace Holyrood? We know what Holyrood is right now. We are still trying to keep that going. Mr. Speaker, I think Nalcor will do a good job in keeping that operating for the next four years until we decommission Holyrood, but we could not continue to burn fossil fuels when we have this resource up there. Yes, it costs a lot of money upfront, but it is going to pay dividends into the future, Mr. Speaker, pay dividends for the people of this Province into the future for generations to come.

It is a beautiful thing, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it. There are people in North America who are envious of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We can stand on our own two feet. Right now, we are in a little tough spot, and that is all it is. It happens in people's lives. It happens with provinces, it happens with countries, and it is short term. We are in a good spot overall.

The future has never been brighter for this Province. Anything that you see here happening now and the money we have to borrow and the place to get to that we can pay off our deficit,

that day is going to happen, Mr. Speaker. The fundamentals are in place for Newfoundland and Labrador to grow, to be the place it can be, to grow our culture, to grow our people, to grow our children.

Mr. Speaker, I will not stand for too much longer; I just want to just call out the good things that are happening. The doom and gloom that I hear, it is all politics – and politics is important. We need to have that back and forth. We need to challenge what ideas are out there.

I firmly believe that the ideas that have been hatched on this side of the House, that have been nurtured and brought forward, are good things for the people of the Province. We have more ideas and we have more visions of what we can be going forward. I believe we have the balance that it takes and we have the people that it takes to carry us into the next four or five years, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly look forward to the election this fall because it is going to be interesting.

There is going to be a lot of conversation about what we should and should not be doing, and we need that in a democracy. We need to have that conversation. I look forward to hearing what the Opposition have to say, both Opposition parties. Because do you know what, Mr. Speaker? They add value to who we are as a people, everybody in this Province. By challenging what we are doing is a good thing – it is a good thing.

The NDP play a critical role within our government, within our Province; they play a very important role. They make sure that we have a social conscience, and I believe everybody over here does have a social conscience. They do a very good job of that and they do a good job every day, day in and day out. They do not play too much politics, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, what I will say in the end is I am happy to stand here today and just talk a little bit about our future, where we are going to, where we came from – and again, the future is great. I think my children are going to be in a better place, I am in a better place than my father was, and my father was in a better place than his father was, and that is what I truly do believe.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to rise again and contribute a little more to the Budget debate. I wanted to participate in the private member's debate yesterday and I did not have an opportunity because we ran out of time. The motion yesterday was dealing with getting rid of government waste. I just want to make a couple of comments.

The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi said yesterday that motion that the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East made was a waste of time. I would never make that observation on anybody else's work here in the House of Assembly, and I patently disagree that was a waste of time because I think any debate that deals with getting rid of government waste is a good use of our time.

That is not a surprise because the member also made the same comment about it being a waste of time when we were debating whether or not we should cut the fat and get rid of the parliamentary secretary positions. Those exact words were used; this was a waste of time. Of course, that also was not a waste of time.

She also talked about how all the Members of the House of Assembly voted against their private member's motion on the minimum wage that they had last spring. I spoke on that private member's motion that day, Mr. Speaker, and I will remind Members of the House of Assembly that, as I said, I grew up in a family of small business people. My mother worked for thirty-seven years in a general store that my parents owned in Lord's Cove, and my mother is permanently disabled from standing on her feet behind a counter for thirty-seven years. I know something about how hard small business people work.

While all Members of this House of Assembly, I believe, accepted the recommendations of the Minimum Wage Review Panel, government has

not enacted those recommendations. The Liberal Opposition supported the recommendations of the Minimum Wage Review Panel. The Minimum Wage Review Panel, in addition to recommending a schedule of increases to the minimum wage, talked about how important it is to give six months' notice to small business so you do not, basically, screw up their business, for lack of a better term.

The motion that was put forward on the minimum wage by NDP – and if you repeat a fallacy over and over again that does not make it fact. The reason why I voted against that motion is because it had absolutely no consideration for small business. They wanted an immediate increase retroactive back to 2010, no notice, basically, to small business. I do not support that still, and I know small business people do not support that still. I just wanted to get that clarified.

Sometimes there are private members' motions in the House of Assembly and the party caucuses vote certain ways and I do not like it. I do not call it a waste of time. I recall back in November of 2013 the government put forward a motion supporting an increase in the Low-Income Seniors' Benefit. Everybody except for the NDP members voted against the low-income tax benefit for seniors. I did not like that. I did not call it a waste of time, but I think it is indicative of where it is the NDP wants to take the Province.

In addition to basically increasing taxes or at least not decreasing taxes on poor seniors in the Province, the former Leader of the NDP always talks about how she wants to increase income taxes on the rich people of the Province. I always wonder where all these rich people are because I do not know who they are. I do not know a whole lot of rich people in this Province.

Of course she is talking about people like the tradespeople who work for IOC in the Member for Labrador West's district. Those are the rich people she wants to increase personal income taxes on, people who have decent jobs. People like health care providers, or PCAs, or LPNs, or RNs, or pharmacists, or lab techs, those are the rich people the NDP wants to increase taxes on. People like public sector workers of all sorts. All the people who are lucky enough to get a

good job working offshore, those are the rich people the NDP wants to increase taxes on. So do not tell me about somehow we do not understand how to properly manage an economy. I have far more confidence in the Leader of the Liberal Party –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: – the Member for –

AN HON. MEMBER: Humber Valley.

MR. KIRBY: – Humber Valley, I apologize, than I do in anybody on that side. In the last provincial election the great idea that the former leader came up with herself, as far as I know, was to impose a 3 per cent surtax on oil companies. It was all researched out and they knew exactly how it was going to – and it turns out it was not researched at all. It was in complete contravention of all of the agreements that we have on Hibernia, on Hebron, and on White Rose, the whole nine yards. It was in contravention of all of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Then when David Cochrane asked on CBC how are you going to deal with that because it is completely in contravention of all those agreements, she said basically she would come into the House of Assembly, if they were the government, and tear up those contracts and basically destroy all the hard work that everybody has done building the oil industry in this Province by showing that they cannot have faith in a government in this Province. I will take no advice from people who think that way, thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: I just wanted to set the record straight on that. Now back to the Budget debate itself which I said the other day should have been titled: lost opportunity and misplaced priorities. The member got up that time, I think he is the Minister of Service NL, is he, the Member for St. John's West? I do not know the number of times that people have changed ministerial responsibilities over there. It is hard

to keep track of it. There are some people over there who have been a minister of about ten different things probably since 2011, or maybe even more than that.

The poor Minister of Natural Resources, he is also now the Minister of Education. We have the Minister Responsible for Seniors and a whole wack of other things. He has Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. He has AES. It is really hard to keep track, but he talked about doom and gloom and so on, but it is not doom and gloom. It is important for the Opposition to point out the shortcoming of government.

That is what the private member's motion was about yesterday. It was not a waste of time. Nobody who stands up in this House of Assembly and represents their constituents well and discusses the issues, whether I agree with it or not, is wasting anyone's time. We are here for a reason: to debate. If you do not like the debate, if you do not have time in your busy schedule to be here in the House of Assembly, then go somewhere else and do not worry about wasting time.

An example of a lost opportunity, remember the vessel replacement strategy. I remember I heard at one point ministers in this government saying they were going to build up to ten ferries in this Province. Where are they building ferries at now? In Romania. The ferries that were supposed to be built in the Member for Terra Nova's district, in the Member for Burin – Placentia West's district, and other places around this Island, those ferries were supposed to be built here and now they are building them – there is a Northern European; where is the company from? Is it Norway, a Norwegian company?

AN HON. MEMBER: Netherlands.

MR. KIRBY: There is a company from the Netherlands, a Dutch company building our ferries in Romania. We do not know – the minister has not been able to tell us yet whether or not we are going to be penalized by the federal government for doing that.

In Nova Scotia, meanwhile, they are building a whole fleet of vessels for the Canadian military.

There are all sorts of opportunities. As I said in the House before, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians built ships for years –

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On a point of order, I want to clarify about us building boats in Newfoundland and Labrador. No shipyard in Newfoundland and Labrador bid on the eighty-metre vessels that are being built in the Netherlands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

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

MR. KIRBY: This minister should also have the responsibility for making excuses for the government added to his portfolio, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have built ships for hundreds and hundreds of years and we could do it for hundreds more, but what you have to do is work with industry. Government's responsibility is not to create jobs; government's responsibility is to create an environment where business, industry, is able to create good jobs for people, like the Liberal Party did in the oil industry in this Province when the Liberal Party was last in power.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Then speaking of fabrication in the offshore, what happened to the third Hebron module, remember that? Think about this, all of the spinoffs – you can say well, we took a cheque from the oil companies because we were not able to get them to do what they agreed that they would do in this Province and build that third module here. We have given up so much – it is not about getting a cheque. How much is it worth, all the spinoff industry in this Province, if we had the third module being built here and other fabrication, more fabrication going on for the offshore than we already do, we would have more spinoffs from that. There would be workforce development, there would be labour

force development, there would be all kinds of opportunities for training for apprentices, there is no question about that, thousands and thousands and thousands of hours of opportunity for apprentices who are looking to get their tickets, and that has all been washed away.

All the technology transfer that happens when industry works in our Province and brings ideas in and brings expertise in, and there is a lot of residual expertise and technology transfer that is left behind after those projects are done. We have lost an awful lot because this government cannot work with the industry to get them to keep the commitments that they have more or less signed on.

Then there is the fluorspar mine in St. Lawrence, which is in limbo – and it is funny; I remember, just before the last provincial election, my father and I are always having a racket about politics. Like probably lots of members here, you sit down and you have a good racket about politics; you have a good conversation. My father and I have great debates about it. We were out shearing sheep out by my father's barn in Lord's Cove and he said they are going to open the fluorspar mine now. I said: Don't be so foolish, they are going to open the fluorspar mine. Every election the government says they are going to open the fluorspar mine, and what happened after that? It is all in limbo.

There was going to be colleges and training and oh, the stuff that they were going to do in St. Lawrence. Well, we have assurances that something eventually – wait until the election now, Mr. Speaker, this will be the kicker. You wait until the election. We are going to hear more about that during the election. There will be ribbons cut somewhere I would say, but there were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of jobs promised. There were 200 jobs and we are far from 200 jobs in any case.

I do not like to pick on the Member for Grand Bank because I know he is trying to do the best that he can, but how can you work with that, Mr. Speaker? You cannot work with that. I mean, it is shocking.

Then you look at the forest industry; my colleague, the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, again questioned the minister

responsible on this today, basically the padding of the statistics around employment in the forest industry. Dr. Wade Locke, who this government has put out there time and time again to support their borrowing, their overspending, and so on and so forth, he has actually come out and said that more or less they are off the mark when it comes to that.

It is not only that, under this government's watch – I just finished reading a book about Joey Smallwood's life and Smallwood – it is almost a sin to read; it would make you sad because he was always searching for another mill in this Province. Right now, we have the one; two of them are gone. On this government's watch, we lost two mills and all of those people now are basically working out of Province. They preferred to let that slip away. They should have worked harder with the industry. They should have worked harder with the union and tried to come to some arrangement where we could have preserved those mills for this Province.

Then the fibre is basically inaccessible now. The mills cannot get product to do sort of domestic work, if you will, creating lumber and so on domestically. The Roddickton pellet plant is still not materialized. They put a big investment into that and we are still far from that. People are trying to access this fibre resource and cannot access it. There you go, there is another lost opportunity.

Then the fishery – and it makes me so sad to even talk about this because both of grandfathers were trap skiff skippers out of Lord's Cove. When they were not working in the mine in St. Lawrence – which eventually killed the both of them – they were fishermen. The plant in Lord's Cove, they basically used to employ several hundred people and now it does not even employ several handfuls of people.

There are all sorts of schemes that have been bandied about but there have been so many fish plants close: Hant's Harbour, Salvage, Jackson's Arm, Port Union, Black Tickle, St. Lewis, Marystown and Burin. The other day –

AN HON. MEMBER: Port Union.

MR. KIRBY: Port Union.

You have to look at the news – this whole business about the government is allowing now all these exemptions – we found out, thank God – to take raw products out of the Province for processing elsewhere, what have you, and we have shut down all of these plants. The Burin plant used to be like a crown jewel. It was a place where they actually did some decent secondary processing and we were all very proud of it. Now, that is also gone. That really shook people when that happened.

In Fortune, the government made concessions to OCI. I heard the Premier say – I do not know if it was yesterday. One day the week he said that was all to deal with yellowtail, but it was 75 per cent on the yellowtail and 100 per cent on the red fish. They have yet to live up to that agreement.

I heard a woman, Karen Caines, in the news there again today talking about the need to get something done there for the people of Fortune. It is a big problem. So that is another huge lost opportunity.

Our industry, the fishing industry is the reason why we are all here today. The vast majority of our ancestors came here 500-odd years ago to prosecute that fishery, in particular. Probably not my colleague's ancestors – the Member for Torngat Mountains – but they also, for thousands of years, prosecuted our fishery. Now it is a shadow of what it used to be and it is deeply saddening to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That has to be said. A major lost opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Another area that we have lost opportunity in is in tourism. There are all sorts of statistics you can go to. The government cherry-picks the statistics that they want to get out there. If you want to tell the full story, you can find big holes in their argument.

One of the things they did there a while back, a couple of years ago, were those ads that everybody talks about. All the crowd on the mainland, anybody who is lucky enough to see them, people talk about how great those ads are. They are shared on social media wildly when a new one comes out.

The government decided to cut that. I mean that was something that was hugely successful. They could not cut the Parliamentary Secretaries, but they had no problem cutting into the tourism advertising budget. So another huge blunder, mismanagement of the highest order.

Look at what they are doing now to outfitters. It is just completely ridiculous what they are doing to outfitters on the Great Northern Peninsula, increasing licences. No discussion, no consultation. This is the open government with the open minister, the open website, and so on.

They did not consult with the outfitters about this. They are all up in arms. Their costs have skyrocketed. A lot of them do not know how they are going to manage to stay in the business because of what government has decided to do.

Big game hunting and fishing in this Province is something that has attracted everybody from the first President George Bush to average Americans who just come here to sport fish and to engage in hunting. Often, at the same time, they spend a lot of money here. It is good for the economy. It is certainly good for the Great Northern Peninsula, and to go ahead and do that is very damaging. It sends a very negative message to small business people who are trying to carve out an existence in the tourism industry.

Those are just a few things. I have a whole pile of stuff, hopefully I will have lots more time to talk about it, but that is just a few examples of lost opportunity. Instead of moving forward with economic diversification, as the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Official Opposition has said, this government talks about business attraction and does very little with it – very, very little with it.

It has made decisions to the detriment, like the outfitters, the IT industry here. One example comes to mind, where they have made decisions that are to the detriment of small- and medium-sized businesses in this Province. They talk about building this billion-dollar or multi-billion dollar ocean technology industry and there is the odd announcement but there is really nothing comprehensive coming from government on that. We are not hearing anything comprehensive. So, basically, this is a failed economic record.

That is part of the reason why we are in the mess we are in, because we are in a mess. We are in a recession. It does not get a whole lot worse than this economically. What sort of message does that send to young people who want to stay in this Province, who want to stay here? They want to raise their families here. What sort of message does that send? It is a very negative one.

That is why, I say to the member, that is why, I say to the Minister of Natural Resources, when I go to the grocery store, when I go to the corner store, when I go around my district, people say they cannot vote for this government again. It is as simple as that. People say I voted PC all my life, I am not voting for the PCs ever again.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

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

It is a pleasure again today, Mr. Speaker, to address a few words to Budget 2015, and as always, following in the tradition of other speakers, a pleasure to represent the good constituents of Placentia – St Mary's.

The District of Placentia – St. Mary's is probably one of the most diverse districts in the Province, certainly geographically. It has a number of different geographic components to it. I mentioned these before, forty communities and 540 kilometres of road.

The biggest community would be Placentia, of course. Whitbourne is also a fairly big growth centre. It is a diverse district. It has the components of St. Mary's Bay. It has a component of the Cape Shore. The Placentia region itself, and the Whitbourne region – all separate regions. It is definitely a challenge, Mr. Speaker, to have presence in all the district, but always a great district to represent, and certainly it has been a pleasure for me to do so.

I would like today, Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments, to express some congratulations to the Member for Cape St. Francis, who had an excellent fundraiser last night out in his district with 300 people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Very encouraging, and a great night, and congratulations. Kudos to the Member for Cape St. Francis for a very good night.

Mr. Speaker, when I spoke last on the Budget I was speaking to the sub-amendment, and I think now I am speaking to the amendment, as far as I know. So later on we will get a chance to speak to the Budget itself, but now we speak to the amendment. It gives everybody an opportunity to speak a number of times on this Budget, and that is something we always look forward to doing.

When I last spoke, Mr. Speaker, about this Budget, I talked about the five-year plan that the Finance Minister had put forth in Budget 2015, and how that plan was a balanced, measured plan to take us through the fiscal times, hard times of the next five years and bring us to surplus in five years. The key words in there were balanced, balanced plan, and a measured plan, and it bears repeating.

That is the plan this government has for the next five years, because that five-year fiscal plan says what we are all about for the next five years, where we are going. It is very clear, very detailed, and very concise. It has targets to it, ones that we are pretty confident we can implement, and ones that sit well with the public of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of different options open to us, of course, and these have been beaten around by different sections of the public, and by the people in this House. Taxes; increasing taxes being one of them. There are some people who thought we should have increased taxes more than we did. People said you cannot have government without paying taxes. Other people thought, of course, we should not have introduced any taxes at all.

There were others who thought we should reduce programs a lot more than we did, and reduce the civil service a lot more than we did. There were some people who suggested we should not touch that area at all, and there is the other component, borrowing. Some people said we should not be borrowing at all, and some people said we should be borrowing more. So these were the sorts of conversations that led up to this Budget.

Mr. Speaker, we put together a plan that we thought had the least impact on the economy and gets us through the next five years. We recognize the economy has slowed somewhat and that we had to put a plan in place to deal with that. The public expects no less. The public expected a responsible response from this government, and that is what this government has done. I think that response sits well with the public, contrary to what we might hear from the other side.

Mr. Speaker, there is no hue and cry from the public with respect to this Budget. I do not hear it, and it has nothing to do with my hearing abilities. I had one call from my district about HST, but I have not heard anything from my district about borrowing, about cutting the civil service. Except every now and then you get people who say you should cut it more, but we did not want to do that. So the response has been pretty good.

Our attrition plan, for example – we have cut into the civil service by an attrition plan. That is received very favourably, both within the civil service and outside. There is no big outcry to it. You do not hear anybody going around in this Confederation Building with their heads hung down because of what is happening to the civil service. We brought in an attrition plan which the civil service is very happy with. We could have cut a lot more, but we did not want to impact the economy.

Mr. Speaker, the people on the other side will continue to say we are cutting 1,400 to 1,600 jobs, as if it is happening right now. Well, the Member for St. John's North made a statement that is very true. If you keep repeating the same fallacy over and over people accept it as a fact. These guys over there are noted for that. If you keep repeating the same fallacy over and over,

then people accept it is a fact. We are cutting 1,400 to 1,600 jobs by attrition over five years. I think most people are very happy with that.

We did not cut deeper, as some people suggested, and no layoffs. Mr. Speaker, by doing it that way we are keeping our young and our brightest people. When ten people leave by attrition, we hire ten people back. We are hiring the young, the brightest, and the best. That is the whole benefit of this arrangement. We are not getting rid of our best. We are keeping our best and hiring more. There is no outcry out there about that. I do not hear it.

Mr. Speaker, what about the tax increase, a 2 per cent increase in HST? Well, there was some pushback on that. Nobody likes taxes. There are two things in life that you cannot go without, taxes and death. Nobody likes taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I got one call in my district about the HST increase, one call. Once we explained the HST, then that person was very satisfied. People are saying you are cutting on the backs of the poor people, of the vulnerable, of the low income, and that is not the case. Because we have raised the threshold for the tax credit, doubling the number of people who benefit from the tax credit. We have raised the tax credit to \$300; \$60 per person as well in addition to that.

I read an article that said some people will be better off because of the tax credit than they are now. You get this report from the other side that we are making it tough on low-income earners, but, in fact, that is not the case. This whole business about being a job killer and an economy killer, the statistics show it is has a 1 per cent effect on the economy.

Mr. Speaker, with the extra levels of income tax, the hon. the Member for St. John's North mentioned a few minutes ago, about taxing the rich. We have created two new levels of income tax on higher income earners in order to bring it in line with the rest of Canada. Out of all of that, after the taxing, the HST credit, and with the high thresholds for HST and for personal income, we have people in the Province who pay no provincial income tax because the threshold is so high.

Mr. Speaker, with all of that put together, we have put \$2 billion back into the pockets of people in this Province in income tax; \$2 billion. If we had not done that, we certainly would not have the billion-dollar deficit today. In terms of figures and statistics, we would be much better off today if we had not done that. If that is squandering money, if that is wasting money, well, we wasted money by lowering income tax levels and putting \$2 billion in taxpayers' pockets. These are the sort of facts, if you repeat the fallacy several time, it is interpreted as fact by some people.

Not to mention our Poverty Reduction Strategy; which makes us the envy of the country. Putting these things together, no one can say we have not treated low-income earners fairly in this Province. No one can say that.

There has been no outcry about the tax situation. There was an initial pushback. Once the explanation gets out there, you do not hear it today. As I said, I got one call. I do not know about others on this side of the House but I doubt – you could count on one hand the number of calls each person will get. The other side would not tell you that. Once explained of how it works, people understand it very well.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to borrowing, the other part of our plan. From 1987 to 2003, this Province borrowed almost \$7 billion. From 2004 to 2015, to the present time, this government has borrowed \$2.10 billion, less than half.

Mr. Speaker, our borrowing is certainly inline, and as a result of our borrowing we are able to invest in infrastructure and program growth. We have to do that in order to sustain the economy. We do not want to impact the economy by cutting and not investing. There is no outcry to that. I do not hear a lot of people in my district calling me about borrowing.

Another important part of our Budget was the private partnerships arrangement for long-term care. I think most people in the Province accepted that very well. It showed thinking outside the box. To build 360 long-term care beds in this Province, Mr. Speaker, would cost hundreds of millions of dollars. By doing it this way, it will cost nothing upfront. It will be able

to provide 360 long-term care beds in this Province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, how people cannot get to that – when I heard the Member for Burgeo – La Poile saying the other day, he was complaining because people in his part of the district, Port aux Basques, could not get a bed in the Corner Brook hospital. I think it was twenty beds in the Corner Brook hospital occupied by long-term care people waiting for beds. Acute beds occupied by long-term care people. He was upset because his constituent could not get a bed in the Corner Brook hospital. Well, one of the reasons he could not get a bed in the Corner Brook hospital is because it is occupied by long-term care people, yet he is against private partnerships.

The Member for St. John's North mentioned the other day he had some family concerns and had to use the health care facilities, and was amazed to see people on stretchers in the corridor and so on, but he did not say upstairs there were people occupying beds that should be in a long-term care facility. Yet they are against this proposal to build 360 long-term beds. The Member for Bay of Islands, if I remember correctly, said he would reverse that private partnership deal, to the union members out in front of this building.

Mr. Speaker, the people approve of that program. You do not hear any kickback from the people on that. The unions certainly want to beat their chest on something like that and understandably so, that is their role. They engage in spending hundreds of thousands – I do not know how much money they spent, but certainly thousands of dollars on an ad campaign on TV saying government is going to privatize everything. It did not resonate, nobody watched it, nobody listened to it because people are aware of the fact they have to think outside the box to try to get things done.

The previous speaker on our side, the Minister of Environment and Conservation, spoke about Nalcor. There is considerable criticism of Nalcor. I will speak to Nalcor again in a few minutes if I can get a chance but Nalcor is our plan for the future, part of it. It is an investment. It is the future of this Province. By 2025 it will return \$1 billion in investments to this Province. That is our future. We have to invest upfront.

You do not make money if you do not invest money.

It is a criticism that is unfounded, but there is no public outcry on that. A few people complained about it but when the polls were sent around earlier, 65 per cent of the Province approved Muskrat Falls.

Mr. Speaker, I did not want to rehash what I said the last time around but that is our plan. Our plan, as I said before, is balance and measure, and we will stack it up against the Liberal plan, when they get one. We will stack it up in the polls. It is clear, it is concise, it has targets, and we will certainly go behind it.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have called for an early election. The Opposition Leader has repeatedly called for an early election, sooner rather than later. Now we discover that while they were making those calls for an earlier election, they did not have an economic plan to go with it. They are only making one now. They are only putting one together now.

We must have frightened them, Mr. Speaker. We must have lit a fire under them. Now all of a sudden it is hey, let's back up here, guys. There might be an election called; we do not have a plan, so let's go get one. Here we are calling for an early election but if an election were called today, we might get caught with our proverbial drawers down. I do not know if that is unparliamentary or not, Mr. Speaker. If it is, I withdraw it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) of your pants.

MR. F. COLLINS: Yes, they would be caught with their pants down anyway. The Liberals said hang on guys, there may be an election called. If there is one going to be called, we do not have a plan yet. They called a big news conference last week; we have to get a plan. They filled the room with twenty-five people and called it a big economic plan.

They say they will have it ready. They are going to have it ready. I get it. You will not come out with it soon but you are going to have it ready. They are not going to go to the polls without

one. They will have it ready hopefully. We will stack up ours against it, whatever it is.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a few minutes about some of the initiatives of this Budget as well. Besides the 360 long-term care beds that were already mentioned, the new municipal fiscal framework that the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs came out with is well received. My mayors and councils in my district are absolutely delighted with it. Mr. Speaker, \$600,000 going into municipalities in my district, new money, and certainly they are all very pleased with that. The amount is \$20,000 in some small communities, but to a small community \$20,000 in new money is a lot of money. They are very happy with that.

Mr. Speaker, we put \$660 million this year into infrastructure and we have to do that. Our economy is slowing and we have to do our part to make sure we sustain that economy. We are going to do that. I do not know what planet the Member for St. John's North is living in. He said we are so bad in this Province now it cannot get any worse. It does not get any worse than this. I do not know what planet he is on. What about the pension reform this government has gone through? Where would our deficit be today and in the next ten years if he did not do the pension reform?

Mr. Speaker, my time is running short so I have to cut some of the stuff I wanted to say here. I am sure I will get a chance to speak again when the next time comes around.

What the Liberals have done now, they have seen that there is no great outcry out there to the Budget so they have come with a different direction. Now they go back and they accuse us of squandering money. That is the only thing they can go with. They do not have plans of their own so they are going to accuse us of squandering money.

Kudos to the Leader of the NDP or the Member of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi who sat down yesterday after just speaking for five or ten minutes because the private member's motion was a waste of time she said – kudos to her; kudos, because it was.

The Member for St. John's North criticized the Member for Signal Hill –Quidi Vidi for her election platform she used in the last election, an election platform that he campaigned on. He was an NDP member then; he campaigned on that. He campaigned on that and now he is criticizing her for it – oh, the beauty of it all, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up; I will leave it at that. I will have another opportunity to come back and say some other things about the Budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am happy to stand again and to speak to this Budget. When I last spoke I identified how important the macroeconomics is in our Province. We are in a recession, our Minister of Finance has finally acknowledged that we are, and so there are a lot of things to tend to looking at the overall economic health of our Province and what is at stake in the future, where we are going in the future.

Again, what I would like to do is just kind of drill down a little bit and look at what is actually happening, what is affecting with our macroeconomic situation, how is it affecting the lives of our people. Because that is what this is all about; this is about the lives of our people. Our Province is about our people. With our people, we exploit our resources, we use our resources, we look at ways to increase revenue, we look at ways of increasing prosperity so that nobody is left behind; but what I would like to do now is look at the issue of housing. Mr. Speaker, we know how important the issue of housing is. It is important because the Canadian Medical Association, which is comprised of doctors all over the country, two years ago they released a report saying how affordable, safe, adequate housing is one of the key social determinants of health.

I want to talk about this because we know that we are in a housing crisis. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Last week, the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions met and heard from community groups, from service providers, from individuals and families in Corner Brook and around that area. Without exception, Mr. Speaker, we heard from psychiatrists, we heard from social workers, we heard from managers, we heard from counsellors, we heard from individual people who are suffering complex needs, we heard from families who have adult children with severe, persistent, chronic mental health issues – without an exception, everybody talked about the issue of housing.

We heard from the assistant superintendent of the correctional facility in Stephenville. He talked about housing, so we know that housing is at the crux of whether or not people can get well. We know that housing is at the crux of whether or not people can work. If you do not have a place to live, how can you work? How can you get on with your life? If you do not have a place to live – I remember Dr. Ladha, our chief forensic psychiatrist, probably one of the most senior psychiatrists and most experienced psychiatrist in the whole Province, has said at times: There is almost nothing I can do to help people get well if they do not have a place to live.

I heard not so long ago from small business owners, particularly in the tourist industry up along the Northern Peninsula, who said that they are having a hard time getting workers because there is no place for their workers to live, particularly if people are working minimum wage jobs. You cannot get a decent place simply to lay your head for under \$800 a month, plus utilities. People who are on Income Support, there is no way they can afford that. People with minimum wage, there is no way that can support that.

The other thing that I heard from was in Labrador, from the correctional institute in Labrador, how security guards cannot get time off and they are working overtime. It is the only way that they can get the coverage in the correctional facility. They cannot get relief workers because housing is too expensive.

Then, we have the revolving door – you know, when we looked at the policy years ago of releasing people from institutions and out into the community, particularly people with severe and persistent mental health issue, it was a good policy, open up those doors, people can go back into the community. When we looked at the closure of places like Exon House as well, people with disabilities, a number of different kinds of disabilities, but the proper resources were not put in place.

So what we have is unrealistically high proportion of people with persistent mental health and addictions issues in our prisons. We have people in our psychiatric hospitals because they do not have a decent place to live. Often that is one of the factors.

It is so interesting, again, to hear correctional officers from all across the Province who are working in our correctional facilities saying one of the key problems for releasing people back in the community is that they do not have a decent place to live. So then what we see happen is they may end up in a horrendous boarding house.

I have been to some of these boarding housing. A number of these boarding houses are in my District of St. John's Centre, so I am happy to speak about these issues because I know that they affect the lives of the good people of St. John's Centre. Boarding houses where people are paying \$600 for a room, plus utilities, and maybe there is one bathroom for eight men in one house. It is horrendous. They are awful places.

If you have social problems, if you have addiction problems, if you are persistent mental health problems, it is a horrible way to live. You are housed maybe with other people who are drug users, who have problems with alcoholism. You just got out of jail. You are clean. You do not want to have any trouble with that, but you are surrounded by that. So then what we have is the constant circle of people not being able to get well. What happens is it costs us way more money.

We know – the research has been done – that it costs more money to not house people properly than it does if they end up back in the Waterford

or if they end up back in Her Majesty's Penitentiary, which is thousands of dollars a day in the Waterford and close to that in the Penitentiary, let alone the whole issue of human suffering.

It is has been interesting the research that has been done around if you have good, affordable housing – and we are talking about pretty modest housing – and supportive services at hand, that the success rate of people being able to rehabilitate themselves is exponential compared to if you do not have these services.

Now, I have stood up in this House, I do not know how many times, to talk about the issue of housing. Sometimes I have been really hard on government, really, really hard on government; but the other thing that we have to take into consideration is that the federal government has fallen down on its responsibility. It has fallen down on its responsibility around the issue of housing.

Now, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities put out a paper today, and it is very interesting. Their paper that they put out today is all about housing. One of the things that they said in their report: "Affordable housing is increasingly out of reach for many Canadians."

I remember when I was first elected, Mr. Speaker, what I would do is talk about the housing for a lot of people who had persistent problems and complex needs in my district, but also, I am getting up and talking about the issue of seniors. Again, we have the fastest-growing population shift of seniors in the whole country, and among those seniors we have the highest percentage of seniors on OAS and GIS, and a good percentage of those are elderly women. That means they are living on \$1,100 a month.

So again, I know I have said this a number of times in the House, if you are living on \$1,100 a month and you have to rent an apartment, you are looking at at least \$800 a month, plus heat and light on top of that. That will bring you up to \$1,000 a month. That is before you have phone and cable. That is before you have food – there is no money left for food, there is no money left for transportation, there is no money left for your copay for your drugs, there is no money left for clothing, and there is no money

left to get your hair cut or to buy your granddaughter a graduation card or a graduation present. We will have the highest number of seniors living in poverty. That is not what we want. I know that there is not a single person here in this House who wants to see that happen.

I have also been talking about the challenge for our young working families who want to buy a house. We know how important it is to buy a house. If you can afford it, if you can afford the down payment, if you can afford the legal closing cost – because what is happening is that you are building up equity and you are building up net worth for your family. Now, we know that is increasingly getting out of the reach of young working families. Because aside from their mortgage payments, they have their car payments, they have their student loans, and they have those huge child care costs – at least \$1,000 per month per child. If you have two kids, you are looking at a minimum of \$2,000 a month. Some people say they cannot afford to work, or they cannot afford to have children. We know we want our young working families to have children. There is not a person in this House who does not.

It is not enough for me simply to be hard on our own provincial government, although there is a lot to be said because we have never, in the history of this Province we have never had a comprehensive housing strategy or housing plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): Order, please!

MS ROGERS: We have some social housing, that is Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, but not a comprehensive housing policy or strategy that looks at, okay, what happens when there is a big resource development project in a certain area and they move in, and then the price of housing goes up?

We have heard about it in Clarendville. I have spoken with a number of people in Clarendville who lost their apartments because of the boom in industry out in that area. That people can raise the rent three times what their past tenant was paying.

I remember going up to Labrador, and it was very ironic that I was meeting with the Housing and Homelessness Network in Labrador, and the Housing and Homelessness worker had just received a notice from her landlord doubling her rent. So she was going to be homeless. That was a person who was trying to help people find housing in Labrador. She was going to be homeless. So it is kind of interesting.

What do we need to do? Well, the federal government, again in this report by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities said, “The 2015 federal budget did little to mitigate this looming crisis as no new dollars have been committed to address the \$1 billion declining federal investment in social housing over the next five years.”

We know what has happened is that the federal government has abandoned the provinces. The federal government had a huge role to play in affordable housing, and also providing money to keep our social housing stock in shape. So they have abandoned that.

We need our own government to take leadership, to lobby the federal government to come back to the table because we need a federal housing strategy. Our housing advocates are saying it; our community groups are saying it. The problem is so bad we can no longer solve it on our own on the provincial level. We cannot solve it on our own on the municipal level, and we know the private market is not taking care of the housing crisis.

As a matter of fact, what we see is that is part of the problem. Part of the problem is the huge, booming economic projects which are fantastic – they are fantastic – but how do we make sure that people do not get steamrolled, that they do not get run over by these projects. That is what is at play here.

“... Canada’s most vulnerable citizens, one third of whom are elderly, face increased housing costs and growing waitlists for affordable housing in municipalities from coast to coast to coast.” It is not just happening here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but, boy, do we have a problem here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I was approached by a young man in my district who was living in a boarding house. He had been in and out of prison. He had a tough life, but he got clean in prison and he was ready to move on. He wanted to work. He was going back to school. He was living in a boarding house that was deplorable, but it was all that he could afford.

He said in the basement of the boarding house he was living in was a man with severe mental illness issues. He said it was so cold in that basement in the winter that the man who lived in the basement, who was so vulnerable, had to wear a coat, a hat, a scarf, and mitts.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Let me tell you about these boarding houses. Do you know who pays for the boarding houses? The taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador, because a lot of people who are in these boarding houses, often through no fault of their own – sometimes through fault of their own, but for the most part not – are on Income Support. So Income Support is our tax dollars as safety nets.

As a taxpayer, I fully support that. The rent for these folks living in these deplorable, deplorable conditions is paid for by our tax dollars. Do you know where that money goes? It goes right into the pocket of slum landlords.

One of the things is that almost three years ago, Mr. Speaker, I presented at the Residential Tenancies review, a consultation where Service NL said we are going to review the Residential Tenancies Act because it has not been looked at since the year 2000. I went out and made representation about some of the deplorable situations that people find themselves in, and they have no recourse. I talked about the fact that rents could be hiked by the whim of a landlord and you could become homeless.

How many seniors, women living alone, were told by their landlord, I am raising your rent? Maybe they are raising the rent by twofold or maybe they are raising the rent by \$300 a month, which means that senior becomes homeless. They cannot afford that rent because their income is not going up by that much. They are already living on the edge of poverty, or actually right in poverty.

In good faith, Mr. Speaker, I went to those consultations. I wrote a submission, I presented it. I also sat for hours and listened to the stories of other people. I also listened to suggestions by housing advocates almost three years ago, and we have seen neither hide nor hair of that Residential Tenancies Act. We have not seen it; we have not heard a word. It is almost three years.

Mr. Speaker, what could possibly be taking so long? It is our seniors; we know we have a tsunami of seniors coming. Our seniors are not a deficit. Our seniors are not a problem. Our seniors, as they age and become more and more financially poor, they face incredible challenges, incredible problems, particularly around the issue of housing.

Mr. Baxter Hookey, again, who often calls my office, who often calls into the Open Line shows, talks about the desperate need for affordable housing for seniors in the Port Rexton area. That need exists in St. John's, that need exists on the Northern Peninsula, and it exists in Labrador.

If we do not find ways to ensure there is adequate, affordable, safe housing for our seniors, there is no way we can build the number of long-term care beds they will need. If we do not provide, if we do not plan for affordable housing for seniors, we are going to feel the extent of the cost of that through the need for more long-term care beds. These are seniors who could live in their houses if there was proper housing and proper support services.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke and heard from parents who have adult children with mental health needs, or adult children who have Autism, severe on the Autism spectrum, and these parents are telling me, I do not know what is going to happen to my son or my daughter who cannot take care of themselves. They say, when we age, who is going to take care of them? Where are they going to live?

The problem we have, Mr. Speaker, is that there has no plan for that. There has been no plan to take care of our seniors, to take care of people with complex needs. When their parents die and they need to be living out on their own, there is no place for them.

Mr. Speaker, I raised it in the House again today that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has assets – they must not sell their assets right now until there is a full consultation with community groups –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member her time is expired.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad to take the opportunity to spend the next twenty minutes on my feet to discuss these Budget items, Mr. Speaker. You never know when you come to the House of Assembly on any given day, when you are called upon to speak, what might come across your table and what might come across your plate. I have always said that I was the kind of person who would look at all sides and try to negotiate and find solutions. That is the way I was in my former life, and that is the way I continue to be as I act in the position of Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

This afternoon I stand and really have to challenge the federal government on some news that has come across my table this afternoon. Just a couple of hours ago we received the fisheries management plan for the Atlantic halibut in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans today announced the total allowable catch for the Atlantic halibut in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Divisions 4RST.

The sharing formula stabilized in 2013 will be used to distribute the first 864 tons, and the remaining 172.8 tons will be shared equally between the eight regional inshore fixed-gear fleets, currently involved in a directed Atlantic halibut fishery in 4RST, Mr. Speaker. On the surface that sounds like good news, but when

you dig a little deeper it is not quite the good news that we were expecting.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back and spend the first bit of my time talking a little bit about the halibut fishery on the West Coast of the Province – and I know it affects the Member for Bay of Islands, and other members from the other side, and obviously, it affects fishers in the area, which I represent as well. So, when I go through this, I will also then jump back to Forestry and Agrifoods and then clue up on some of the fisheries issues.

Mr. Speaker, just for background purposes, in 2007, the federal DFO established a stabilized sharing arrangement for the inshore fixed-gear sector for 4RST, the Atlantic halibut, based on historical participation in the fishery, and the Newfoundland inshore fixed-gear fleet received a share of 32 per cent out of that allocation. Despite this sharing arrangement, from 2009 to 2011 several quota allocations for the Atlantic halibut were split equally amongst the inshore fixed-gear fleets in the Gulf, rather than in accordance with the sharing arrangement established back in 2007. The Province asked DFO to reverse these decisions since they did not reflect the established sharing arrangement or the historical participation in the fishery of which the West Coast fish harvesters were involved.

There was an external review that took place by Ernest Young in 2012 and confirmed that the sharing arrangements established in 2007 followed the DFO federal policy and was consistent with sharing arrangements established for the other groundfish fisheries in Atlantic Canada. Following that review, DFO announced that the shares for the Atlantic halibut had been stabilized at 2013 levels, which resulted in a reduced share for Newfoundland and Labrador inshore fixed-gear fleet from 32 per cent to 29 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Today, just an hour or two before I came to the House of Assembly, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced that the 2015-2016 total allowable catch for that area 4RSD, Atlantic halibut, has been increased from 864 tons to 1,037 tons and the science is there to actually show that, so that is good news.

However, Mr. Speaker, DFO also announced that the increase of 173 tons – that is the extra allocation for this year – will be split equally amongst the inshore fixed-gear fleets rather than in accordance with the stabilized sharing arrangement. For those who are familiar, there are eight zones, and the zones include the Gulf of New Brunswick; the Gulf of Nova Scotia; the Gulf of Prince Edward Island; Western Newfoundland, which is the one I am very concerned about; Quebec North Shore; the Gaspé Peninsula; the Magdalen Islands; and Scotia Fundy.

Mr. Speaker, just over an hour ago the FFAW – we have been in contact with the FFAW – held a press conference here in the city as well talking about this particular allocation and the announcement that was made by the federal minister. Basically, just reading from their press release, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced today that it would no longer honour the long-standing, stable sharing arrangement on the Gulf of St. Lawrence halibut quota. They go on to say: The 2015 sharing arrangement will result in the Newfoundland and Labrador's share being reduced to 24 per cent, a 7.5 per cent reduction in that particular share.

It follows the decision made by the government where harvesters on the south coast, 3Ps harvesters – the provincial government advocated for a 14 per cent increase and we ended up with a 7 per cent increase for 3Ps halibut fishers this year. They were not given the consideration for their historic share of that particular halibut catch, of that particular quota this year, Mr. Speaker.

The FFAW press release goes on to say, “The reduction in the share of halibut to NL is an attack on the viability of enterprises that are most in need. West coast harvesters have some of the lowest earning opportunities from the fisheries and are heavily dependent upon the Atlantic Halibut. On the south coast, harvesters in 3Ps hoped to supplement a difficult crab fishery” – we know the difficulty this year with that particular species – “with an improved halibut catch. Fishers from both coasts received the same disrespect from the federal government.”

Again, just a few second ago, science supported a 14 per cent increase in the 3Ps halibut and ended up at the end with the 7 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for the Province it is totally unacceptable to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, totally unacceptable to me as the Fisheries Minister, that Minister Shea today is not respecting the established arrangement of the Atlantic halibut in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and continues to erode Newfoundland halibut fleet's share. She has basically taken halibut away from Newfoundland inshore harvesters and provided it to harvesters in the Maritime Provinces.

It is strictly, I believe, a political decision as the existing sharing arrangement was based on historical landings and was confirmed through an external review, the one I just spoke to. The largest beneficiary of the decision today is the fleet from Prince Edward Island. The extra allocation, following the traditional way it was allocated, would have given fifty extra tons to West Coast harvesters and we end up with twenty-one tons of that allocation today. So it is absolutely unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, what is interesting when we look at that and the point that I am trying to get to is that Minister Shea and the federal department has not decided on an alternative to LIFO – and we have been talking about that for the last number of months – in the shrimp fishery, yet ignores the principles of our own department regarding stabilizing sharing arrangements when dealing with the halibut in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

I want to go on record here today in the House – it is not what I want to speak on, but I want to go on record and say to the people of the Province and to the fishers on the West Coast who fish in the halibut zone that it is absolutely not acceptable. I have not spoken directly yet to the FFAW, but they had a press conference in the last hour or so. I support the efforts of the FFAW with regard to this particular cause.

The federal minister has repeatedly made decisions to the detriment of 3Ps fishers as I spoke about earlier, the halibut harvesters on the South Coast, and now is continuing that trend in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

I requested a conference call with the federal minister before I came to the House this afternoon. I put a call in to her office. She was not available at this particular time. She is out of her office, but I will still put that in. I have drafted a letter to be sent of this afternoon to illustrate and to say to her and to demand to her that what was announced today is unacceptable to the harvesters on the West Coast, unacceptable to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is time for her to go back to reverse that decision that was made today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is another example, I believe, of how Newfoundland and Labrador in this particular case, is not treated the proper way in the federation and it is unacceptable, as I said before. It is shocking, it is appalling, and that decision is absolutely wrong today.

Mr. Speaker, with that aside, I want to have a look at some other aspects of the department that I am absolutely responsible for. I stood on the floor here a week or two ago and spoke with regard to forestry and agrifoods. There were some things in forestry and agrifoods that I did not get an opportunity to speak to. I want to speak to the forestry and agrifoods aspect this afternoon, and then get back in my last remaining minutes this afternoon to go back and speak to the fishery. I want to jump to forestry and agrifoods at this point in time.

Budget 2015, Mr. Speaker, will provide \$12 million to the Growing Forward 2 program, the Agriculture and Agrifoods Development Fund, Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program, land consolidation, Agricultural Research and Development Program, and Agricultural Limestone Program.

Growing Forward 2, it is a \$37 million agreement with the vision for a profitable and innovative agriculture, agrifoods and agri-based products. It provides financial investment through three program areas to address the unique challenges and opportunities facing our agriculture and agrifoods sector. Growing Forward 2 is built on partnerships. Farmers and producers utilize this program to further enhance their entrepreneurial spirit to be creative and innovative, and to help drive economic growth in the Province in the agrifoods and agriculture industry.

Some examples of the Growing Forward 2 program – and some I know very, very well – Pure Holsteins Limited in Little Rapids on the West Coast has a new state-of-the-art milk production system because of the Growing Forward 2 program, Mr. Speaker. It has the first robotic milking system in Newfoundland and Labrador. Already this innovative project has resulted in an 18 per cent increase of milk production in the Province.

Lester's Farm Market Incorporated here in St. John's has a new harvester that improves crop harvesting speed and efficiency, Mr. Speaker. Our investment will enable the farm to be more competitive and allow them to increase their acreage.

Growing Forward 2 continues to invest in Agriculture in the Classroom activities – and I spoke about this one last week – including the Little Green Thumb's program which is being offered in many classrooms this year, Mr. Speaker. The Agriculture and Agrifoods Development Fund provides \$2.5 million annually to encourage the development, diversification, and expansion of large-scale agriculture projects in either the primary or secondary processing in the agrifoods and agriculture industries.

Another program that we support in this Budget through our department is the Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program that provides \$2.25 million per year for secondary processing activities which will improve the economic viability of the agriculture and agrifoods industry. Mr. Speaker, \$2.2 million in the Land Consolidation Program. It provides an opportunity to non-farmland owners and retiring farmers to sell granted land to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

These programs are widely utilized. They have had good take up on those. It is extremely valuable to the growth and future development of the agriculture industry. We all know how important the agriculture industry is and the food security in the Province, and that we need to move the agriculture and agrifoods industry forward this year and in the years to come.

A strong research and development program is necessary to answer the questions, Mr. Speaker,

that will lead to advancements for the agriculture industry. Our research projects involve the testing and creation of production systems for cereal grains, corn, and soy beans. We also have an extensive research program evaluating new potato varieties and crop rotation systems, which will all aid the industry. We have an extensive fruit crop research program looking at the creation of commercial production of crops, such as blueberries, partridgeberries, cranberries and wine grapes.

I could go on and on speaking about the forestry and agrifoods industries here in the Province, but I want to take the last seven minutes or so that I have to flip back again and talk a little bit about the fishery, despite the announcement today. Again, I have always said from the onset that I have always been the kind of person who would always, in a difficult situation, try to find a solution and try to find an answer. I, again, appeal to the federal minister to go back and look at the decision that was made today, which would negatively impact the halibut fishers on the West Coast of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking about the fishery, it is an absolutely vital part to our economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has sustained us for hundreds of years, Mr. Speaker, and it will sustain us into the future. It is absolutely a critical part of the economy of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We believe that on this side of the House, and I know the Opposition parties believe that as well. There is no living Newfoundlander or Labradorian who would say that the fishery is not important. The fishery is absolutely critical to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, and both sides of the House, and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians believe that.

There are challenges in the fishery. We have faced challenges for the last hundreds of years. We will continue to face challenges, but it is important that we work together. Union, governments, industry, in-shore, off-shore, it is important that we all work together to find a solution that is absolutely necessary to drive the rural parts of the Province, and not only rural parts of the Province, as we saw with the protest (inaudible) out in Gander, which was led by the FFAW back this past spring. The impact that

the fishery has on the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, not only in rural parts of the Province, but in towns like Gander, Corner Brook, St. John's, and Clarenville, and all these other parts of the Province as well.

The seafood industry has an annual value of approximately \$1 billion. It was a little less last year, Mr. Speaker. Our government intends to continue its support to the growth and sustainability for generations to come. It is the moral, the right, and the responsible thing for us to do as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, no matter what political party you represent. This can be achieved through investments in fisheries science and innovative research, as well as partnerships with industry stakeholders from harvesting, processing, and aquaculture sectors of our Province's seafood industry to plan for the future.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to partnership with industry, in December of last year our government announced Newfoundland and Labrador Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy 2014. The strategy is focused on achieving gains in three particular areas: enhancing sustainable management practices, growing capacity within the industry, and promoting research and development.

We have grown the industry in a very short period of time from – I will use rough numbers – \$10 million to roughly, I believe, \$195 million or \$197 million. I do not have the numbers in front of me, but from \$10 million over a period of about ten years to nearly \$200 million, Mr. Speaker.

The strategy was developed using feedback received from more than 120 participants who engaged in aquaculture consultations that took place in November and December of 2013. We went out around the Province and had participants. They included representatives from industry, academia, non-governmental organizations, Aboriginal organizations, and municipalities from throughout all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the strategy also updates the provincial government's approach to capacity building by committing to help industry players enhance communications with the public, secure

and develop human resources for the aquaculture industry, and pursue international market opportunities. We know now that nearly 50 per cent of the wild fisheries of the world are trying to provide for the ever-growing population of the people on this earth.

The wild fisheries are not able or are not keeping up with the demand for protein from the ocean. In aquaculture, some numbers show 47 per cent, 48 per cent, and some numbers show nearly 50 per cent. It is nearly a split between the wild fisheries of the world and aquaculture fisheries of the world.

Through investments in fisheries, Mr. Speaker, science, and innovative research, our government is securing world-class knowledge to move our fishery successfully into the future. Newfoundland and Labrador is the only Province in the country to solely fund its own offshore fisheries research initiatives with more than a \$15 million investment in the Marine Institute's Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research since 2010. That is often known as CFER, the acronym – sorry, the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research in Newfoundland and Labrador.

CFER is the largest university-based seagoing fisheries research facility in North America, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2015 includes \$2.6 million to continue support for world-class fishery science at that particular centre, and I have had the opportunity to visit and have discussions. It is amazing what kind of research is taking place there.

Research and development is what will sustain a fishery. Research and development is what will sustain any industry. I am proud to say, and the Government of Newfoundland is proud to say that this is the world leading fisheries research centre, and we have it right here on our own doorstep in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, and we are proud to support that particular centre.

Mr. Speaker, an example of the funding in action will be the \$100,000 we committed to help the FFAW and the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research at the Marine Institute to continue a study of Atlantic halibut. It is pretty coincidental, that we looked at studies of

Atlantic halibut and find out today, as I speak to this particular topic, that the quota was shared differently than it should have been shared, Mr. Speaker.

Again, \$100,000 we committed to help the FFAW and the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research at the Marine Institute to continue a study of Atlantic halibut in the Gulf of Lawrence, to conduct satellite and traditional tagging of halibut to determine migratory patterns, spawning areas, and so on, Mr. Speaker. This research allows us to study the marine environment off our coast to prepare our industry for changing stocks based on science.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on, but I only have a minute left. I just want to go back into the Budget document and look at our contributions in Newfoundland and Labrador – the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador contributions to the wild fishery and contributions to the aquaculture in Budget 2015 and 2016, in my last forty-five seconds.

There is \$6.5 million out of the Budget which goes towards the wild fishery, Mr. Speaker, a \$4 million investment in aquaculture. The Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research is \$2.6 million; Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation, CCFI, \$1 million; Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program, \$1 million; Fish Plant Worker Employment Support Program, \$750,000; Seafood Development Program, core program funding, \$525,000; fisheries science and cod recovery, \$300,000; enhanced seafood marketing, \$200,000; coastal and oceans management program, core program funding, \$150,000 – for \$6.5 million.

In my last ten seconds; aquaculture capital equity program, this is money for aquaculture, \$2.8 million; aquaculture for a wharf in Milltown, \$975,000; and the oceanographic research, new money, Mr. Speaker, \$240,000 for a total of \$4 million.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. GRANTER: There is \$6.5 million for the wild fishery, and \$4 million for aquaculture.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

MR. GRANTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the non-confidence motion of the Budget, because I certainly have no confidence in this current Budget or in the government. I painted that out the last time I spoke when I clearly identified the Liberals as good financial managers, sound financial managers of the economy, and I highlighted how the Conservatives, both federally and provincially, are bad financial managers of the economy.

It is basically Tory economics, as I said before. It consists of bloated spending and diminished revenue sources, a perfect fiscal storm of fiscal imprudence. A Tory economic policy does not extend much beyond trying to sell the finite resource of fossil fuels.

I am glad the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture stood up and spoke just before I did, because he really highlighted the value of what this government, when it comes to investment into wild fishery – what government touts the fishery as being a billion-dollar industry. Only \$6.5 million, he just said, will go into the wild fishery from an \$8 billion budget; \$8 billion-plus and only \$6.5 million will go into the wild fishery; \$4 million for aquaculture, \$2.8 million for CFER, and another \$1 million for research.

I echo the concerns the minister will have when it comes to halibut quotas and when it comes to quota allocations that adversely impact fishers. I think the minister needs to take more steps and make sure he gets that meeting with Minister Shea and goes to Ottawa, if he is as concerned as he says he is on this matter, because we need that to happen. We do.

The last time, when it came to LIFO, the FFAW got a meeting prior to the all-party committee and the Minister of Fisheries when it came to a very important matter of LIFO. I want to see proactivity when it comes to the fishery, not reactivity. We are certainly seeing that from this government on the other side. We have seen fish plant after fish plant close. We have seen

job loss after job loss in the fishery. We have seen a lot of negativity.

The Minister of Fisheries got up and boasted about the spending, the \$15 million in research that was done by CFER, saying: We are the only Province to fund 100 per cent fisheries research. The minister knows this as well, that it is the federal government's responsibility to do fisheries research.

What the government is doing is they are saying, well, we will do the work of the federal government. We will do that responsibility. We cannot get them to live up to the agreement of the terms of union, so we will do it ourselves. We will spend \$15 million of taxpayers' money here that is not going to be invested into the wild fishery now, that is not going to be invested in other alternatives. That is going into research that should be funded by the federal government.

This is another situation when the Prime Minister of the country says we are willing to look at joint management of the fishery. What has this Province done when it comes to securing joint management? Nothing. There is no commitment on the fish fund.

We sat in Estimates actually last night, and we went three hours. I had more questions for the Minister of Fisheries, but there was no agreement to carry the meeting further than the three hours. Shut down the debate, shut down the time. When it comes to asking questions in Estimates, that ended. Now I have the opportunity. As the minister said, you have other avenues. So I am using my time here today to do that.

MR. GRANTER: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, on a point of order.

MR. GRANTER: It is the first time in four years I stood on my feet to go to a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Last night, Mr. Speaker, I did not use a preamble. His colleague did not use a preamble which gave him an extra half an hour.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

MR. GRANTER: He did not stick to the lines in the Budget, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the minister to go back and review the audio. The questions I asked were related to the line items of the Budget.

The fishery is a very, very important topic that requires certainly more than three hours of debate. For the minister to not even have a preamble for his own department, I say that is shameful.

MR. GRANTER: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, on a point of order.

MR. GRANTER: Yes, indeed. I will challenge the member opposite to go back and review what he said last night, Mr. Speaker, and come to the House and say that he stuck to the Budget lines.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: The questions that I asked, Mr. Speaker, were budgetary in nature and related to fiscal items, not policy items.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: There is no current MOU, which was confirmed by the Minister of Fisheries last night under CETA. So that means there is no agreement on the fish fund up to

\$400 million. On the co-operation on research, it is not there. They are doing this research but they are saying, well, it is publicly available. So he really confirmed that the dollars that were invested, we are not getting anything in return from the federal government in terms of the research that Dr. George Rose is doing.

There is limited compliance when it comes to many cases. There are actually bad contracts that are written, or many loopholes it seems in them when it comes to things like Fortune. As the minister is saying one thing one day, the Premier is saying another thing another day. Now they are going back and changing.

It is a lot of flip-flopping when it comes to what is actually there in the fisheries item. We are really seeing problems when it comes to the management of our fishery. This comes to my next issue, PC math. PC math and Tory economics, they are two things.

The Minister of Fisheries is also the Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency. When I got up in the House for the last three days in the House of Assembly, I have asked the minister to come clean on the forestry jobs here in this Province. Members opposite, in this budgetary debate, have touted and said that there are 5,500 jobs in forestry and it is worth \$250 million.

Well, the minister tabled a document, after repeated questions, saying that the 2014 employment and value for the industry in pulp and paper, sawmilling, value-added harvesting, direct employment totalled 2,539 jobs. That is the direct employment, then indirect and induced, the same number, the exact same numbers. So if somebody is harvesting a log then there is an equivalent job associated somewhere out there in the economy to that. We do not know what it is, and the minister will not explain or will not provide the House these calculations, because they have been asked for. Then it states that there are 450 government employees associated with these 2,500 direct jobs.

I want to go back to government's line because we need to go and look at the economy where it was under this government. In 2008, they commissioned a report that they accepted as the

Newfoundland and Labrador forest sector strategy. The final report is readily available for the public. So what it said for sawmill operators, value-added pulp and paper, woodland operations – this is when Abitibi was still operating. We had another pulp and paper mill. We had more sawmills operating. We did not have the job losses that we have today, even Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, Kruger, had more employees at that time in 2008.

Let's put this out there; in 2008 the total value of all the jobs was 2,358 to 2,413. They also stated that 40 per cent of all those jobs are seasonal. It pointed out when we count all of the indirect jobs, government's own report, it said all the indirect workers, namely casual workers or seasonal workers and all other workers in associated industries, whether it is somebody who is driving a truck or whatever the case would be with the value chain of forestry, they said the total number of jobs – this is when Abitibi was still operating, other sawmills were operating, Holson Forest Products had a lot more employees than the two that they have today.

We look at that number, that number back in 2008 was 3,000 people, direct and indirect – 3,000 people in 2008 when we had another mill, we had multiple sawmills, we had a lot of other things happening in the economy in 2008, and there was only 3,000 jobs then.

How is it that the minister is able to claim that there are 5,500 jobs in forestry when back in 2008, when there was much more happening in the industry, there was like half that number of jobs? It does not make any sense. That is PC math. If we look at PC math, that same number in 2008, just looking at the value-added jobs, it said that there was 300 – 300 value-added jobs.

What did the minister table in the House? He said the value-added jobs were 1,075. Well, that has a lot of explaining to do, that there is that much growth, that there are 775 jobs created that are value added. Not only that because if I take his number ratio to ratio, if there were 300 value-added jobs, then he would say that there was the equivalent value – because he is saying that in indirect and induced, there is another 1,075 jobs associated with these people who are working in value added.

There are 2,150 jobs that the minister is saying in 2014, value added. So if I take his PC math and in 2008 there were 300 jobs associated with value added, so there would be an equivalent 300 jobs for the indirect. That would make 600. The minister is saying that in value added they increased by over 1,500 jobs when the forestry is in economic decline, in downturn – the forestry economic diversification fund, the Auditor General slammed it when it comes to the investments and the jobs that were supposed to be created by this government under that fund; it just was not there. There was not good management and a real failure.

The people of the Province are not fooled by the Budget here and the numbers that are there and the associated numbers in The Economy; they know, as well, as I do the PC math.

If we look at the GDP and Employment by Industry, page 1 of the government's own document, The Economy, what does it say? Goods-Producing Sector: Agriculture, Forestry & Logging, the projected value for GDP, in millions, was \$177 million. The employment in person years: 2,200. Now this is counting agriculture as well. The percentage of people employed, all of the employment, is 0.9 per cent. That is for agriculture, forestry and logging, yet the member got up yesterday for Exploits – and I would like to see somebody speak up for the forest industry on that side; we have not seen – we have had Members for Grand Falls-Windsor, Buchans, Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South, Exploits who is the Parliamentary Secretary, the minister, and nobody is actually talking about the forestry and the real challenges that are associated with it – and the jobs. Dr. Wade Locke, government's own endorsed economist when it comes to the Muskrat Falls Project and the reason why this Muskrat Falls Project should go ahead – but not if it reaches over \$8 billion, he said. If it goes past \$8 billion, it is just not economically viable. So, the project right now is pegged at \$7.99 billion. Interesting PC math, isn't it?

When it comes to Dr. Locke's report, when he went to Grenfell, which is the minister's own district there is in Grenfell in Corner Brook, he said in 2013 when he gave his presentation, that there is only about 1,100 jobs that are directly associated with forestry. He talks about this,

and he talks about the resource sector. So we see that under the last twelve years of the Tory government that they have lost jobs and jobs and jobs when it comes to the non-renewable sector.

When it comes to forestry, when it comes to fishery, the jobs are in decline. The only focus on that side of the House has been on finite fossil fuels, just like the Harper government. They have been focused on non-renewable resources. It is incredible. So I hope the minister will get in the House and come up and explain the numbers associated with the job.

If we look at what is happening in the economy here, government has been focused on these large megaprojects – well, there is a fiscal cliff when it comes to megaprojects, because the sad thing is and the reality is that after the Muskrat Falls Project is built, all those jobs, those 3,000-plus jobs, they are gone. They said there are 120 jobs that will be associated with running the project after the fact, after 2017 or 2018. So jobs are gone after that.

How are they going to be replaced in the economy? I do not see this in their Budget; I do not see this in their fiscal plan, in their economic plan that they are putting forward. They are saying: Where is the Liberal plan? They need to look at their own plan that they put forward, and the people of the Province are going to judge them on their record and they are going to judge them on their current plan that is put forward.

The job creation is not there, year over year. If we look at the housing starts, they are going down. That impacts forestry. That impacts the sawmills. It impacts people in rural districts. It impacts people in your district, Mr. Speaker; it certainly does. When we look at all of these opportunities – this government has created the perfect fiscal storm when it comes to the borrowing aspect because the Attorney General got up and he said, well, the people in his district, they do not mind borrowing. They will borrow and borrow and borrow.

Well, this government has borrowed. They have borrowed a lot, because total public sector debt under this government has gone up to \$12.2 billion. That is where it is at. It is more now in 2015 than what it was when they started. They had \$18 billion in oil royalties, more this year,

and Atlantic Accord money. I mean, this is preposterous for the people of the Province to be able to get up and say they endorse this record, they endorse this – the members on the opposite side should look at what we are saying here and should vote down this Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: They should bring down the Budget, bring down the government, and have an election so that we can restore order to the people of the Province in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Attorney General talked about the Budget through the attrition part and talked about the no layoffs. Just before the Budget was announced, the Acting Minister of Education got up and he announced 77.5 teaching units gone. Now, those units gone will be upwards of 150 employees. Those are people who have jobs all over the Province in Newfoundland and Labrador. I guess the Attorney General in his district and in his area they have no schools that are impacted, no teachers who received those layoffs. It is very, very frustrating to see.

I go back to looking at what my colleague, the Member for Virginia Waters, has talked about: the lack of project management and poor planning by this government. You only have to look at things like the Placentia lift bridge. The reason why – they put a tender out and said the tender was too high, so we are going to retender and we are going to save money. They did not save money on that when they retendered. If they did the work, when it was brought forward under the tender, they would have saved money; but going forward, even with the lower tender, they had to do an excessive amount of repairs, it delayed, and it had impacts to the economy and on business for a longer period of time and now there is more money – the capital projects that cost us \$55 million.

I say the timelines and poor planning and not being able to bring projects in on line, on time, or on budget is a track record of this government. It is a hallmark of that government. It is actually part of the PC math that they have. They put out a tender or they put out a project and they announce it at a certain value, and then it goes up and up and up in cost.

I remember the \$7.25 million wooden hospital that they built in Flower's Cove. That was supposed to be \$7.25 million. That is what the contract was awarded for, but at the end of the day it came in at over \$9 million. That is an escalation when it comes to capital projects –

AN HON. MEMBER: What was the original price?

MR. MITCHELMORE: It was \$7.25 million that the contract was for and now it is close to \$10 million – right in my district, way over budget.

The same thing when it came to looking at schools, over budget; they opened schools and did not have the water supply fixed – poor planning. When it comes to looking a long-term care facility here in the Province, you see that it is not staffed. Yet they cut the LPN program out of the St. Anthony College of the North Atlantic that trained dozens of LPNs successfully that are employed, and they could have continued training there in St. Anthony or at some of the other small campuses. They had the infrastructure in place, but they decided that they would cut it and now you see where you have an employment mess when it comes to managing, which is going to cost the health care budget more and more and more.

I could stand up here all day and talk about PC math, the Tory record, all the bad budgeting, and all of the problems and holes that are currently in the Budget, and I will, every opportunity that I get up to speak, use social media, speak to my constituents, travel across the Province, and set the record straight that PC math is wrong. It is no wonder they are going back and reviewing the math curriculum because they need to review their own math, and this Budget is a failure to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I have no confidence, and I will be voting for this amendment to bring down the government.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a lively crowd here this evening. It is a pleasure to stand here again this evening and talk on the Budget.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I believe the hon. member has already spoken to the amendment.

Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an opportunity for me to have a few more words on an amendment, an amendment that obviously comes up every year. It is a way of, I suppose, giving everyone an opportunity to get on their feet, not only to get on their feet but just talk about anything that they want to talk about.

Following the speaker ahead of me, I must say, it was intriguing to hear him talk about some type of math and numbers and that sort of thing. I could get up here, I suppose, and add up a lot of things that we as a government have done that I am very, very proud of, including some things in your district, I say to the hon. member.

I remember, I think it was in about 2001, going up into that particular district and being absolutely appalled at the state of that particular district. It was appalling. It was absolutely appalling. Roads absolutely in disrepair and, to add insult to injury, it was a district that was represented by a former Premier. I could not believe – and not only that, driving up the Northern Peninsula back in I think 2000 or 2001 the road going up the Northern Peninsula, I tell you, you had to navigate around potholes, road upheaval and that sort of thing; but we met the

challenge in 2003. We met the challenges that were proposed to us as a government with regard to trying to bring this Province back from the absolute brink.

AN HON. MEMBER: The abyss.

MR. HEDDERSON: The abyss is what I would call it, yes.

I do not know what kind of math we used but if it was PC math that got us to where we are today, I say we should continue it. Absolutely, continue it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: I tell you right now that we had the foresight to realize that we had to choose priorities and one of the priorities was indeed the Northern Peninsula, the length of the Northern Peninsula. Because we knew that eventually with some luck and a lot of money that the Trans-Labrador Highway would be opened and the plan was – what would be the sense of opening up the Trans-Labrador Highway when you had the Northern Peninsula that was in disrepair? We laid the groundwork, starting in 2003, to try to make sure that we had that highway going up the Northern Peninsula. To hear a member who is representing that district get up and say that we did absolutely nothing in his district and to talk about a wooden – did you hear him talk about a wooden structure, a wooden hospital?

Well, I tell you, it was that or nothing, because that was one of the decisions we had to make with the cost of it there. I would think that whether it is wooden, or whether it is stone, or whether it is a tent, people are getting the services out of that building that they absolutely need. How could a member get up and say: Oh, my God, what a mistake was made.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. HEDDERSON: Yes, but it was built out of wood, and he is the champion for forestry. Absolutely, but the only problem is that it is not heated with seashells.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: If it was heated with seashells, he would not say a word, not a word. If I could say collecting seashells by the seashore – I cannot do that. I am sorry.

Obviously, the people of this Province are not duped into believing that this government did not haul his Province back from the brink. I am a testament, and I can give testimonials about the state of this Province back in 2003. Make no doubt about it, it costs money. It costs a lot of money, and it is not finished yet.

I appreciate members on the opposite side getting up, but guess what they are saying? This is not done and that is not done and that is not, and I can agree with them. Because you cannot, in ten years, bring back this Province from where it was. It is absolutely impossible. The neglect, I would say neglect not only from the previous Administration, but the previous, previous Administration which happened to be a Tory one.

I said it the other day, there is no government that can do everything for everybody. The needs are just too great, and priorities have to be made. That is what this Budget is all about. How we got here or why we got here or how we are here is immaterial to me right now, because I want to make sure, standing here in this House, that I have some input to what goes into that Budget. Is it everything I wanted? Absolutely not, but I am around here long enough to realize that you have to make hard decisions when you are in government.

The Member for St. John's North talked about the other day: Oh, when I was over in Opposition I was told more teachers, more this, and more that. You are right, and I did. I could not understand – you must have a lot of time on your hands to go back over Hansard and what I said back in – I was honoured, as a matter of fact. I sat there and said: what kind of a fool would go back and look at what I said back in Opposition? What kind of a fool would do that? I do not know.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

MR. HEDDERSON: Oh, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member the use of the word fool in that context is unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw it.

MR. HEDDERSON: I certainly will withdraw. I would not want to, in any way, Mr. Speaker – it was just like a slip of the tongue I suppose, a Freudian slip maybe. I will endeavour, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that I do not have those slips of the tongue, unless I want to get out of here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Looking at the time and that sort of thing, I do not think I want to die on that hill today.

To the Member for St. John's North, it was just a figure of speech and I certainly will withdraw it. I will say to the member, you do not have much to do if you are going back over what I said.

It is interesting, because a day later the same member gets up and I was kind of surprised because I know he was elected as an NDP and then he was saying to the leader, or alluding to the Leader of the NDP, all of that is hogwash, all that stuff that you believe in.

AN HON. MEMBER: He saw the light.

MR. HEDDERSON: I do not know about seeing the light but that is a change in ideology overnight, because obviously there are great differences, as the Leader of the Third Party, between that party and that party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: I went up from Opposition to government, and I think he can excuse me for being passionate in Opposition, but for someone to stand up and say, look at him, he was over in Opposition and said all this, but when he got over in government he kind of just went along with everything. I did not change my ideology. I stuck to the principles and I stuck to this party because I believe in the party, and the people who elected me obviously believe in the party and where we are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: I say, Mr. Speaker, when we get up and talk about the Budget, thank heavens that we can, but to get back to where I was before I sort of went off on a tangent.

I have seen a Province that has come out of a very non-productive time into a time where we find ourselves to be, and where we are is like where we want to be, in a sense, because I still believe in the people of this Province. I still believe in where we are as a government. I am looking forward to an election that is going to ask the people of this Province to choose, and I have not counted that out yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: If I keep hearing the rhetoric that is coming from that side, who knows? Because I tell you, it is hard to take guys and gal. It is hard to take.

When you go up to the Northern Peninsula in 2003 and you see the mess – and not only in the Northern Peninsula. I will not even put it there – and without blame, because obviously, Newfoundland and Labrador has had difficulties in trying to deal with the situation of having boom and bust. We are at the mercy because everyone talks about commodities and that sort of thing. We are always at the mercy of what goes on outside of our borders and that is so unfortunate.

Again, to have a member get up and talk about, well, you are not even into non-renewable energy. All you are doing is taking oil out and hydrocarbons and that sort of thing. My God, what is water? You can do what you like with water. I am not a physicist or anything, but you can do what you like with water, but guess what? The amount of water on the earth remains constant. Now I suppose you can split it and that sort of thing, right.

I give credit where credit is due. Joseph R. Smallwood, our first Premier, had it right. He had it right. What I do not understand is why his legacy is not recognized by a Liberal Party. He said that we would create a situation where we would have three power plants on the mighty Churchill that would allow us, as

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, prosperity for ever and a day.

Now, that is where it started from. It was with Joe Smallwood. It was not with any of the Premiers that – and every Premier after Joe Smallwood, Tory or Liberal, were determined to get to the second or the third phase of that development.

Who was it? I think the last Liberal Premier, Premier Tobin, \$1 million to go up and announce that. We are going to do it. It did not happen. Premier Grimes was right on the verge of signing it off, knowing that he was up against it and he had to come up with something – but guess what? Thank heavens – he had the brochures done up, everything was done up ready to go, and guess what the bottom line was? If we ever overran or anything like that, guess what? Guess who it went back to? It went back to Quebec.

So, thank heavens it did not happen – and finally, we got the breakthrough that we needed, environmental assessments, and so on and so forth. Not only did we do the environmental assessment, because we are forward thinking – if you are going to go through an environmental assessment, guess what? Include two possible projects. So we are way ahead – yes, two. Now, that is PC math, two. That is not Liberal math, two. Three plants on one river with an environmental assessment – two.

So what it means now, because we have that environmental assessment done – I could use other fingers too, but I better be careful about that. I think I should put my hands behind my back.

To get back to what I said, we have the environmental assessment done for Gull Island. People might say, well, yes, okay – that would cut off dollars and time. It is only a matter of time. Once the people of this Province in 2017 see the success that Muskrat Falls will be, I think and I believe – regardless of who is in government, regardless of who is in government – that the Gull Island will go ahead.

Gull Island is the key – Gull Island is not to make sure that we are an independent system. It is not to make sure that we are getting the

domestic energy that we need. What Gull Island is, is the money-maker. That is the one that is going to get us way over the top. We also have to take into account that our oil reserves – and there is more out there and they are going to come on stream and that sort of thing, but who in heaven's name wants to have that rollercoaster ride of commodity pricing? We do not want it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. HEDDERSON: Exactly; someone is getting my math. As a matter of fact, I just saw a light go on over there which is good. That is good.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. HEDDERSON: That is right. I am glad that we got that one.

Like when you are teaching sometimes and the student gets what you think and the light bulb goes on, I just saw that in the Member for St. John's North, and I am so pleased. If nothing else today, the bulb went on and he understands renewable and non-renewable. Wow, that is a teacher's delight. Thank you again for that teaching moment. Oh my God!

Again, Mr. Speaker, all jokes aside, I believe in the plan that we have in place with regard to our development of Muskrat Falls, the hope that we can get to Gull Island and really take advantage of what I consider to be one of the biggest reservoirs of energy that we have in the world; a reservoir, by the way, that we would never be gotten in this day and age – never, ever. Fortunately for us that it is there, it is a reality; but to try to get that now through environmental assessment and everything, you would not even come close. It is there, it is developed, and it is energy that is just waiting.

Of course, I always mention that 2041 date. That is so, so important. We have to keep that in front of us because when you go and work backwards from 2041, many of us will not be around – we all know that. If we are, we probably will not know we are around. I have a chance of being there. I am going to be in my eighties, but I would love – I know my grandchild, hopefully, will be there and maybe

her children might be around, but that is a legacy that I would love to see. That would fulfill the dream of our first Premier. It is not very often you get me up speaking about Liberal Premiers, but I understand where he was and I also understand – someone said, oh, well, all of those jobs, they are going to be gone; but I will tell you what will not be gone is the expertise that these, and especially young people, are going to get.

I remember – just a little story – a next-door neighbour, a Grade 11 student, graduated from Grade 11 but he went immediately to Churchill Falls. He got a job as a labourer, worked, and when he came back – because I remember him coming back on the very day. He drove up in a 1964 Mustang, a blue one. Here is a Grade 11 student, he was only about eighteen at the time, nineteen – and that gentleman, by the way, went on and he worked with the surveyors, and to this very day he has made a career in surveying. How many more? There are still people, tradespeople in my district, that their first job was Churchill Falls. They have built bridges, they have built buildings, and they have done everything.

To think that a project is wasted because once it stops, the 2,000 people who worked on it are gone – and guess what? They are moving on somewhere else. If you think about it, just think how prepared we are going to be for Gull Island. They are going to move from Muskrat Falls and onwards to Gull Island.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for your guidance today and your patience, and I would say that it is getting that time and I am looking at the House Leader so I guess I will sit down. I am glad it is not 5:30 p.m. or I would be in trouble.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further speakers?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the hour of the day and it is Thursday, I move, seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 o’clock.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 p.m.