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*Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA*

Monday

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I would like to welcome all members back for another week in the House of Assembly. I trust you had a good weekend.

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we will hear members' statements from members representing the Districts of The Straits – White Bay North, Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, Baie Verte – Springdale, St. John's South, Torngat Mountains, and Cape St. Francis.

The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate St. Anthony Basin Resources Incorporated (SABRI), a visionary social enterprise that advances our fishery, enhances transportation links, tourism, preserves our history, and fosters economic development for seventeen communities on the Great Northern Peninsula.

The AGM highlighted a new twenty-year deal inked with Eimskip to acquire the multi-million dollar cold storage that will enhance the Province's second largest international containerized shipping port. The company also invested to provide Broadband Internet for St. Carols, Great Breat, and St. Anthony Bight by partnering with Bell Aliant and the Province. They will also assist the Town of Goose Cove.

SABRI is a model for management of public resources where profits are reinvested in community to create long-term employment, economic stability, and significant infrastructure and social investments that help diversify the regional economy.

I extend gratitude to the staff Sam Elliott, Glenda Burden, Alicia Shears, and board members Wayne Noel, Paul Dunphy, Roy Taylor, Todd Hedderson, Dale Colbourne,

Wilfred Alyward, Carl Hedderson, Sterling Dawe, Dean Patey, Alvohn Pilgrim, Trudy Byrne, Eric Boyd, Lester Bessey, Jordan Mugford, and Peter Hughes.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating SABRI for its continuation of outstanding accomplishments in the region.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

Nine years ago, a gentleman phoned our office with news that his mother-in-law, Frances Peddle of Stephenville Crossing, was 100 years old; her son-in-law Ivan Bennett, married to her youngest daughter Margaret, hoped we could send greetings.

It was my pleasure then to speak with Frances on the phone and wish her well – and yes, for those of you unsure of your math abilities that means that Frances is now at 109 years old, Newfoundland and Labrador's oldest resident. My birthday conversation with Frances this year was as delightful as ever, and we shared a song again as we had done before.

She was born Frances Harnum in Green's Harbour, Trinity Bay, on May 29, 1906, moved to St. John's at fifteen and later to Corner Brook where she met and married Loyola (Bob) Bernard. The two had six children. In 1968, she re-married to Elijah Peddle of New Perlican, who had eight children.

Today, she lives with Margaret and Ivan in Stephenville Crossing. She still enjoys a good song and, I can attest, a phone conversation.

I ask all hon. members to rise and join me in congratulating Frances Peddle on reaching her latest milestone – 109 years old.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. POLLARD:** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, May 22, 2015 I had the privilege to attend a very beautiful graduation ceremony. All thirty-four graduates of Copper Ridge Academy of Baie Verte looked very stunning as they donned their cap and gown, putting many proud smiles on the faces of their parents and teachers.

We are young, we are one, let us shine was a very fitting theme for this class, who exhibited enthusiasm, confidence, and unity as each graduate cheered each other on during the presentations.

The valedictorian, Lindsee Clarke, delivered an excellent speech as she captured the personalities of the class and challenged them with nuggets of wisdom. Reverend Erasmus Madimbu also delivered very timely and wise remarks to the exuberant graduates.

The communities, teachers, and parents are also to be commended for their outstanding support. Without it, no student would be able to excel; no school would be able to experience so much success.

I ask all hon. colleagues to join me in applauding the principal and staff of Copper Ridge Academy of Baie Verte for organizing a very beautiful ceremony, and especially congratulating the graduating class of 2015. May you continue to shine as you each pursue excellence in your chosen career.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This past weekend I attended the forty-fourth Annual Fort Pepperrell Cadet Inspection and award ceremony.

I was impressed with the young cadets who displayed a great deal of discipline, and I commend the senior officers of the Fort Pepperrell unit who dedicate their time to help ensure those young people have an opportunity to learn respect and discipline. I commend the eleven new cadets who have chosen to get involved.

The 2014-2015 cadets are: Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class Jack King, PO 1st Class Olivia Brookings, PO 1st Class Sarah Skinner, PO 2nd Class Damien Synard, Able Cadet Anna Fitzgerald, Able Cadet Nicholas Hiscock, Able Cadet Adam Komiak, Able Cadet Braedon Lamkin, Able Cadet Alison Rose, Able Cadet Zachary Rose, and Able Cadet Belle Warford.

I ask all members to recognize the Fort Pepperrell cadets who have won awards this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the members of the Nain Brass Band who recently attended a Moravian music festival in Herrnhut, Germany.

The international festival brings together about 200 brass players in the Moravian tradition – including musicians from Labrador whose ancestors were converted in the eighteenth century by missionaries with the Protestant church.

Not only is this the first time the Nain Brass Band has taken part in an international event, it is also the first time a Canadian band has ever performed in the Moravian festival.

Members of the band include Michael Dyson, Darlene Holwell, Karrie Obed, Gwen Dyson, and Devin Obed.

The band performed at the Moravian Brass Band Festival, which takes place every two years on May 22, 23, and 24th, performing a number of Moravian songs that they actively prepared for

in Nain under the guidance of Mark Turner, who has been their facilitator for the past two years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the Nain Brass Band on their successful trip to Germany as part of the Moravian Brass Band Festival.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize individuals who have dedicated their time and expertise to their community.

Each year, the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs presents Long Service Awards for outstanding community service to people who have served on council in their communities.

In the Town of Torbay three individuals were recently recognized; Robert (Bob) Codner who has served the residents of Torbay for sixteen years, four as a councillor and twelve as Mayor.

Mrs. Peggy Roche has served the residents of Torbay for sixteen years; twelve as a councillor and four as Deputy Mayor. In 2013, she was re-elected again and still continues to serve the good people in Torbay.

Mr. Michael Byrne served the community for twelve years as a councillor and dedicated countless hours as he was the head of many different committees.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate these three individuals for their Long Service Awards and the efforts they make for making Torbay such a great place to live.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in thanking Bob Codner, Peggy Roche, and Mike

Byrne for their many years of service that they have committed to their community of Torbay.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House to proclaim the month of June to be Construction Education Month. I was pleased to be joined by Ms Rhonda Neary, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association, and Mr. Ed LeGrow, Chair of the Board of the Association, as I signed a proclamation to officially recognize the contributions and achievements of the construction industry to provincial architecture, infrastructure, and economic growth. Construction Education Month is also about the opportunity to highlight educational programs such as the Gold Seal Certification, which is supported by the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government continues to partner with stakeholders in the industry such as the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association. We are fortunate to have many skilled tradespersons in our Province, who bring their expertise and experience to the industry. They support the growth of the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we all reap the benefits of their hard work and dedication to their craft.

Through Budget 2015, our government is investing over \$660 million on the construction and maintenance of health care facilities, long-term care homes, schools, transportation, roads, and municipal infrastructure projects. This funding provides services that are important to the people of the Province and generates employment and economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, Construction Education Month is an opportunity to recognize innovation in environmental and energy efficiency and to support building practices that will have a positive and enduring impact on the Province. There are many examples of such standards being met by this government, Mr. Speaker, such as the new long-term health care facility in St. John's, in new schools being built throughout the Province, as well as the Corner Brook City Hall, the MUN and Grenfell student residence, the Summit Centre in Mount Pearl, and the Natural Resources Building in St. John's. In addition, my department is working towards BOMA BESt certification for two buildings this year – the Motor Registration building in Mount Pearl and the provincial building in Grand Falls-Windsor.

I hope that everyone in the industry will benefit from an informative and productive Construction Education Month. As a government, we look forward to maintaining a positive and lasting relationship with the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who work in the construction industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement. We would also encourage the government to continue its partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association because they do great work in this Province.

Much of what the minister talks about in his statement, regarding environmental and energy efficiency, was contained in government's 2007 Energy Plan. Much of what, I might add, they have failed to implement. The minister also names a number of projects that have met environmental standards, but missing from that list are projects that government has promised but has failed to deliver, such as the Corner Brook hospital, the new courthouse in St.

John's, the Waterford Hospital, or the penitentiary.

While proclaiming June as Construction Education Month may be great for the industry, it does little for the residents of Corner Brook, for instance, who have been waiting eight years for a promised hospital and there are no foundations even in that site yet.

Mr. Speaker, this just goes to show you do not have to spend \$53,000 to tell people what you are not doing. Government can do that quite well.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We all celebrate the contributions of the many talented people in the skilled trades and what they have done in contributing to the economy of this Province. In fact, from the New York skyline to the smallest out port, the skilled tradespersons of this Province have earned a truly international reputation.

That said, many want to stay and work in this their home. I hope government is developing continuity plans to ensure, as far as government contracts go, that there is work over time to allow our skilled workers to stay and live in this Province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this hon. House today to recognize June 1-7 as Environment Week.

Since 1972, people worldwide have celebrated June 5 as Environment Day. However, here in

Canada, the entire first week of June is designated as Environment Week – a time to acknowledge accomplishments in protecting the environment as well as to promote and educate residents about actions they can take to help ensure a sustainable Province for future generations.

Just last week, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of standing in this House and speaking to the incredible contributions of the Conservation Corps of Newfoundland and Labrador as well as the Stewardship Association of Municipalities. Through their work in educating about climate change and their commitment to protecting wildlife habitat in and around municipal planning boundaries, both groups are environmental leaders in their commitment toward a clean and sustainable ecosystem. Later this week, I will also have the honour of acknowledging another seven groups, individuals, schools, and businesses at the twenty-sixth annual Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Awards.

Always a highlight of Environment Week, this event is a partnership between my department, the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board and the Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institutes, and acknowledges the contributions of environmental leaders in this Province. It is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the important contributions of individuals, schools, groups, and businesses that are all doing their part to ensure a sustainable environment for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the incredible work of the staff of the Department of Environment and Conservation. These dedicated individuals make a difference every day through their work in natural heritage, wildlife, parks and natural areas, pollution prevention, water resources management, environmental assessment and sustainable development, and the institute for biodiversity and ecosystem science. As noted earlier, Environment Week is about celebrating accomplishments in protecting the environment and I would like to thank the more than 250 staff of my department for their daily accomplishments and contributions in this area.

Mr. Speaker, a healthy and sustainable environment yields healthy people, a stronger economy and more vibrant communities. This government is committed to working with all residents, groups, communities, and businesses toward the protection of our natural areas and the development of our resources in an environmentally appropriate and sustainable manner. I am pleased to say that we continue to make great progress in these areas. Clearly, there is much to celebrate during Environment Week 2015.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advanced copy of his statement. World Environment Day was created forty-three years ago to stimulate action on the environment and empower people from every corner of the globe to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development. The Official Opposition recognizes the importance and the message of Environment Week and we congratulate the municipalities, the organizations, and advocacy groups on the work they have done.

Unfortunately the government has failed miserably to take action as an environmental leader, and the list of accomplishments clearly is not there. The Budget ads are not listing the number of contaminated or impacted sites that are not cleaned up in the Province, liability after liability; cuts to Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve where dozens of rare plants are; the weak stance on the *Manolis L*; decimated caribou populations; ineffective moose management; heel dragging on the Natural Areas System Plan in the Mealy Mountains park; 219 boil-water advisories; the climate change inaction; and greenhouse gas emissions.

Beyond recognizing the work of others, it is time for government to hear the message of Environment Week and take real action to protect our Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I am pleased to congratulate groups like Conservation Corps, Stewardship Association of Municipalities, and the staff in the Department of Environment and Conservation to name just a few – great work. Government must also live up to their environmental responsibilities.

We have yet to see government's report on the state of the Province's contaminated sites. I notice there was an article in the paper today about the refinery site. Government must also understand it is a disservice to all the good work so many people do in the name of environmental protection to sanction the destruction of a pond and watershed like they did with Sandy Pond, whatever the reason. These types of practices must end, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize June as Seniors Month in Newfoundland and Labrador and to recognize the lifelong contributions seniors have made, and continue to make, throughout the Province.

The Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development was created, in part, to focus more directly on seniors' issues and to reflect the changing reality in Newfoundland and Labrador – an aging demographic – and the opportunities and challenges that presents. But our focus on seniors' issues did not begin here.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first things our government did, in 2004, was to create a Seniors and Aging Division within the Department of

Health and Community Services. Since then, we have established a thirteen-member Provincial Advisory Council on Seniors and Aging with representation from throughout the Province. We have developed a Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and invested in a number of programs to enhance seniors' wellness. We have made changes to the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program which are of specific benefit to seniors, and we have introduced a Low Income Seniors Tax Benefit which, in 2015, will see over \$42 million put directly in close to 45,000 senior households.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in programs and services and community-based organizations which serve the needs of seniors, and others. There has been a \$6 million increase in the Provincial Home Support Program, which last year provided support to about 9,000 clients, the majority of whom are seniors. In addition, there is the Provincial Home Repair Program; the federal-provincial investment in Affordable Housing Program, and investments made in support of age-friendly communities –

**MR. J. BENNETT:** (Inaudible).

**MR. JACKMAN:** The Member for St. Barbe is going to be one of them if he does not stop chattering, Mr. Speaker – all of which are of significant benefit to seniors.

And I always feel good, Mr. Speaker, when I hear how community-based organizations have used the recreation and wellness grants this government introduced to improve the lives of seniors. These investments get to the very heart of our communities, Mr. Speaker, helping older adults to remain active and engaged in their communities for as long as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues in this House to join me in thanking seniors for the role they have played, and continue to play, in building our Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We, as an Opposition, also recognize June as Seniors Month. We know we have approximately 93,000 seniors in our Province. We know that represents approximately 20 per cent of the population of our Province, and we know it is the fastest growing group in the country, the fastest growing by proportion in the country.

Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes June as Seniors Month. We feel this is important enough to recognize every month as Seniors Month.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about the Provincial Healthy Aging Policy, at the same time his government increased pool rates for seniors well beyond those in Mount Pearl, St. John's and Conception Bay South in this past Budget.

Mr. Speaker, the statement references the seniors' tax benefit, we have 93,000 seniors. We are told this benefit will affect 45,000 households. Mr. Speaker, do the math. What portion of our population is forced to affect this gas tax benefit? Mr. Speaker, we maintain every month is Seniors Month.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our prosperity is built on the very hard work of the seniors who have come before us. I too thank them and celebrate their achievements. Far too many of our seniors live in poverty and isolation in our Province. We all get calls from seniors terrified of losing their housing because of uncontrolled rent increases or because the loss of a spouse means their income is cut in half; seniors who live for months and months in silence because they cannot get hearing aids or they cannot get dental work done.

Having built our Province, seniors deserve and have earned better than this. Only then can government toot its own horn.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, the Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier said that the \$400 million CETA fisheries fund was money that was primarily intended to compensate for any losses that may have occurred by eliminating MPRs. These comments were made on the CBC program On Point. Really, that sounds a lot like what Stephen Harper and the federal Conservatives have been saying about this very fisheries fund.

I ask the Premier: Do you now agree with your Parliamentary Assistant that this fund was for losses incurred by eliminating MPRs?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, discussions with the federal government on CETA entailed and involved and included the federal government coming to our Province looking for us to relinquish our minimum processing requirements in the fishery. There were five pillars that we had settled on. One of those is certainly directly relevant to demonstrate a loss, but there are four other pillars as well: research and development, marketing, fisheries research, and fisheries infrastructure.

There is an aspect of the fund that is directly related to demonstrate loss in being able to sustain communities when there is an impact on the fishery and on processors as a result of that, Mr. Speaker. This fund is about building a new fishery, building a new processing industry, revitalizing it, and renewing it, having the

infrastructure and the research to make it sustainable for years to come.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For months and weeks the Premier and members of the government said that the fisheries fund was not intended to be used as compensation for MPR losses. Now the Premier's assistant, as already has been said, is saying that is exactly what the fund was for.

I ask the Premier: How do you expect to actually win an argument with the federal government when even your own members, your Parliamentary Assistant, are actually agreeing with the federal position?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, the fisheries fund, as I said, is important to the fishery. It is about redevelopment of the fishery. It is about sustainability of the fishery. It is about renewing and revitalizing the fishery and processing, which is so important to rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador and those communities who rely heavily on processing jobs and opportunities within their own communities.

This fund that we had agreed upon with the federal government was a \$400 million fund; \$280 million being provided by the federal government, \$120 million to be provided by the provincial government. Mr. Speaker, I ask a very simple question, if this was just about demonstrated loss and providing funding because of loss to the Province, why would we pay for our own loss?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier talks about the agreement that he thought he had with the federal government, but he has yet to produce the agreement that has signatures of both the federal government and the provincial government on it I say, Mr. Speaker.

Hydro-Quebec continues to challenge on water management and the interpretation of the Upper Churchill renewal contract, and we understand that Hydro-Quebec was successful in their attempt to get senior Nalcor officials under oath as part of this challenge. The VP of Hydro was examined last Thursday and the VP of the Lower Churchill project was examined on Friday.

I ask the Premier: If this challenge is not about water management and the Lower Churchill, why is it the VP of the Lower Churchill project being examined under oath?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, it is in the public and obviously there is a court case going on, but the court case itself, with respect to the interpretation contract, the 1969 power contract, the renewal of that contract and the agreement with Hydro-Quebec as to how the water will flow, how the power will flow, whether it will be continuous or interrupted, that is exactly what the court case is all about.

It is not about water rights. We maintain water rights; that has been determined. What it is about is the interpretation of the 1969 renewal contract, which is due in 2016. It is being discussed in the courts, Mr. Speaker, and I do not have any further details.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question was more about – as the minister said, this was about the interpretation of the

1969 agreement or the extension of the 2016 agreement.

My question is: As we have said in the past, this about being water management rights, why is it that the VP of the Lower Churchill Project, the Muskrat Falls Project, is testifying when this clearly is about what the minister says, the interpretation of the other agreement?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the other side I guess with respect to who they want to speak to during this court case; but again, I think the member would understand, this is a court case, a very important one for the people of the Province I might add.

The proper approach will be taken with this, and I will not be commenting on the details of the case. As for who the courts decide should be involved, then that will be a decision they will make, Mr. Speaker, not one that our government would make.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The proper process would have allowed those kinds of interpretations to be done before this project was started and putting billions of dollars of Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' money at risk.

In the last three-and-a-half years, Nalcor has spent \$48 million on legal fees. I ask the Premier: Are you satisfied with this level of spending that we are currently seeing on legal fees by Nalcor?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, Nalcor is a company that is owned by the people of the Province. It does tremendous work with six major lines of business, with regard to CF(L)Co, the Lower Churchill Project, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, Bull Arm, energy marketing, and oil and gas. I think the people of the Province would understand valuable resources are being managed here, and there is tremendous amount of work being done.

With the \$48 million, it is certainly a high number, but it points to a number of things. They are doing an incredible amount of work, Mr. Speaker. Legal fees are high, but, as well, I think it speaks to the due diligence that is being followed. I think that is important for people to understand as well.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of spending money, after \$10 million in taxpayers' money spent, government has spent another \$185,000 on the Roddickton pellet plant this year. This money was not part of any Budget line item and it was not approved in last year's Budget – that is Budget 2014.

I ask the Premier: After saying that no more money would be spent on the facility, why did you allow \$185,000 that was not budgeted for to be spent last year?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, as was said in the House last week, we have a considerable asset there on the Northern Peninsula with regard to Holson Forest Products. Holson Forest Products has designed and developed a new business plan and are shopping around that

particular business plan for future investments in that particular property.

The forest industry is incredibly important in the Province; incredibly important on the Northern Peninsula. There was an asset there that government felt we needed to apply some funding last year to cover the cost of insurance on the asset, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2013, government has not been budgeting any additional money for the Roddickton pellet plant, but in the last three years they have decided that after the Budget was approved to give more taxpayer money to this operation. This total is now over \$300,000.

I ask the Premier: We understand that you do not have first charge on the insurance for the kiln – that is the only first charge you have is on the kiln – so if there is an incident, how much of the over \$10 million in taxpayers' money will government actually recover?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, we believe the investments with regard to the pellet plant and forest products in Roddickton is absolutely incredibly important for the Northern Peninsula and the forest industry, as it is for the entire Province. Again, we felt it was necessary to apply the insurance on an incredibly important asset for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I do not have the numbers in front of me that the hon. member was asking. I will find the numbers for him and I will present it to him.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it is more of a matter of a process: Why would this government insure things that it does not have first charge on? Why are you paying the insurance bill for this owner? Why is it, I say, Mr. Speaker?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, again, I will say that we invested heavily into that plant on the Northern Peninsula, and it is an asset that is very important to the people of the Northern Peninsula; it is an asset that is very important to the Province. We wanted to make sure that there was insurance coverage. The company at the time was not able to pay their insurance on that particular asset. We felt obligated that we needed to do so such that the insurance would be covered, and that is why we did so.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, in 2011, Hydro sold the Roddickton wood chip power plan to Holson Forest Products. Once again, the Province took responsibility for environmental liabilities at the site. At the time, Hydro committed to completing an environmental assessment while Holson was allowed to sell off provincial assets to Quebec, saving a competitor over \$7 million.

I ask the minister: How much did government take on in environmental liability when it basically gave this facility away to a private company?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, the facility the member references was no longer of any use as a power generating asset, and the PUB approved that it could be sold. From 2000 to 2011 a number of processes were followed, and eventually it was sold.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. DALLEY:** Within that, Mr. Speaker, the land itself, there were some environmental responsibilities. I do not have the exact number on the environmental responsibility, but I do know that the land is currently being leased, and Hydro has undertaken to complete an environmental due diligence. I am not sure if that has been done, but I am happy to check into it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, you can see the bad management right there from the other side. The costs of an environmental assessment and cleanup were supposed to be offset by the sale of assets to Holson, yet we know the deal was made for a nominal fee.

So I ask the minister: Was the assessment ever completed – which he confirmed he does not know – and if so, how much was paid for by the sale of the assets to Holson?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** I am not sure how many questions he is asking there, Mr. Speaker. I do know, as I said before, that I would undertake to check into whether Hydro has completed the environmental assessment, their due diligence. I will check that and report back to the House.

Mr. Speaker, the details of the sale of the asset over a ten-year period, two governments, it was basically divested to hopefully enhance some economic value and opportunity in the region.

Some of the assets were sold off, others remained. I do know the land is being leased.

Mr. Speaker, those are the details I have with respect to the environmental due diligence and what is done. I will gladly check into it and gladly report back to the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, students in the child and youth care worker programs are being blocked from work terms at child care centres because government refuses to provide the required child protection record check. Providing these record checks for child and youth care worker students was not an issue at all in the past.

I ask the minister responsible: Why are these students being blocked from work terms in child care centres? Why was this change made without any notice at all?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Acting Minister Responsible for Education and Early Childhood Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

We would all agree, obviously, with regard to the importance of record checks, particularly if you are working in an industry with youth, with children, with vulnerable populations. However, we are looking at making improvements with regard to that records check. Upon coming into the department, some things were brought to my attention, ways that we could improve on that process. That is the process we are engaged in right now.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, the irony here is that once these child and youth care worker students' graduate, they will actually be eligible to write the Level II ECE exam and become certified to work in the very child care centres where they are being denied work terms right now. It is another barrier to recruiting child care providers because this government stopped giving students a needed record check.

I ask the minister: Why is your department obstructing the training of child and youth care workers? When will you fix this and stop creating more problems for the child care sector without any consultation at all?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Acting Minister Responsible for Education and Early Childhood Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, it was just a week ago, I believe, I met with AECENL, the Association of Early Childhood Educators in Newfoundland and Labrador. The tune they had and the information they provided to me is much different than the member opposite, which obviously speaks volumes to me.

They are very happy with the work that has been done. They would like to have it done a little bit quicker and they acknowledge such. It is a ten-year strategy, Mr. Speaker. The member is up on his feet every day talking about our ten-year strategy is not done, it is three years in. If it was done it would be a three-year strategy. We have made great improvements in the system. There are going to be fantastic improvements yet to come, but like I said –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. S. COLLINS:** If I could please finish.

When I meet with people in the industry, I appreciate and certainly I take great comfort in hearing from them and the remarks they have on this. So if the member would like to have a full briefing on the department, I would invite him over because I would like to educate him.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, an October 2014 study, commissioned by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and completed by OrgCode Consulting, found over 5,500 people in 2012 experienced homelessness or hidden homelessness. The study also found that homeless women and youth are particularly vulnerable to abuse and sexual exploitation. Today's Choices for Youth panel on youth homelessness echoed this vulnerability.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services: How many of the sexually exploited youth in the youth sexual exploitation report that you commissioned and then kept secret four years ago were homeless?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was very much an interesting panel discussion, Mr. Speaker. Myself and the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, and the Parliamentary Secretary to Health, and several others who are in this House were down there today. We heard from some youth who spoke about their history and how they have progressed through the system.

Mr. Speaker, I think the message that came out of that session this morning, loud and clear, is we all have to work together to find a solution here. I can assure you, that we on this side are committed to being part of that process.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the question to the minister was: How many of the sexually exploited youth in the youth sexual exploitation report commissioned by this government and kept secret for the past four years were homeless?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, it is a very important study that was done. The sensitive group that was – I cannot speak to how many were homeless in it. By the very nature of the study, it was an anonymous study.

If the member would like to have a chat afterwards, I would be happy to have that conversation, but the fact remains that there are obviously sensitivities around that report. There is anonymity that had to be done during that report, and for me to identify how many were –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. S. COLLINS:** If I could finish, please – how many were homeless, I obviously would not be able to provide that data, but again, I would be more than happy to have a conversation around it.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, if the report, in fact, was anonymous, there should be no harm in releasing it.

OrgCode reported that discrimination by landlords against young tenants put them at further risk for homelessness and, by extension, sexual exploitation. Housing options for youth under the youth services agreements include bedsitting rooms. Bedsitters are not covered under the Residential Tenancies Act, meaning youth living in bedsitters have no legal recourse under the act. Today we heard from the Choices for Youth panel that youth live in fear in these rooms.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services: Does he think it is responsible to consider bedsitters a safe and affordable housing

arrangement for vulnerable youth, especially given they are not covered under the Residential Tenancies Act?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it; some of the youth in the Province find themselves in very, very difficult situations. The way forward, in finding suitable housing accommodations, finding a way forward, as I said in my previous answer, is that we all work together.

I like the Tweet that came out that said: ending homelessness will take many hands; no single entity, organization, or level of government can do it alone. It means we must work together, and, Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that all of us working together can find a solution here.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of AES recently called the disability community an untapped workforce; yet, last year government underspent their grants to organizations by over a million dollars. Budget 2015 cut \$200,000 from grants to disability organizations under the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities. In Estimates last week, they called it rightsizing.

I ask the minister: How can you call cutting this budget rightsizing when persons with disabilities are already under-represented in the work force?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I will be cautious in my answer because the member last session got up and raised much the same type of question, and, in fact, it was not correct what she said. So, I will guard against that.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Secondly, Mr. Speaker, look at the work we are doing in the disability community. We have gone out; we have invested in transportation so that people can more easily get to work sites. We continue to work with that community, and, Mr. Speaker, we have made major gains.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** He did not answer, Mr. Speaker, why they underspent by a million dollars.

Statistics Canada has reported that NL is the worst performer amongst provinces when it comes to persons with disabilities keeping work. They indicated that 35 per cent of persons with disabilities employed in 2011 were no longer employed in 2012.

I ask the minister – our workforce participation rate is dropping. We need more people in the workforce. How do you justify cutting a budget that bolsters diversity and helps reduce poverty for persons with disabilities?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with the disability community. The advisory panel, I have probably met with them, since I have come into this office, probably I would say about four or five times.

We continue to work with them and find ways forward, whether that be through transportation, through establishing standards on our websites, meeting with the larger community, the construction community so that we can improve standards for accessibility, Mr. Speaker. We are doing well and we will continue to work with

that community and to strive to find better ways for the entire disability community.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In December 2013, the Liberal Party put forward a private member's motion urging government to implement a regional rental rate structure for Income Support clients, as was suggested by their own consultant two years ago. This motion passed unanimously.

Eighteen months later, when we asked the status of this motion in Estimates, we were told that you are still working and reviewing the idea. People who cannot afford to rent end up on the street, Mr. Speaker, because without an address they do not qualify for Social Services.

I ask the minister: How do you justify delaying making changes to rental rates when this delay is putting people at risk of homelessness?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I have said several times since I have risen in the House in this particular Question Period, and throughout my answers, that we continue to work with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to find the best way forward to meet the clients of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Look at the gains that we have made to retrofitting Newfoundland and Labrador Housing facilities. I contend, and I have said it several times, the people who work in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. JACKMAN:** – want to find the best way forward for their clients. Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that they will continue to do that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** My question, Mr. Speaker, was about Income Support rates. Government boasts, through their Poverty Reduction Strategy, that the number of people on Income Support is dropping. The rental allowance under Income Support is not enough to meet today's rental rates. Some people end up homeless because the allowance is not enough to pay for housing.

I ask the minister: Will you confirm that your Income Support caseload is dropping because the homeless population is increasing? Why is the minister delaying changing the rates for those on Income Support and adding to the homelessness issue in this Province?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, we have invested \$1.2 billion in our Poverty Reduction Strategy. We have people who are coming off Income Support because they are availing of our programs. Many of them are returning to the workforce.

It is through programs such as through AES and working with clients at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing that we are making gains. Recognizing there will always be a challenge, Mr. Speaker, but working with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, working with the Department of AES, we continue to do well in that particular area.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

Last week the Premier declared that the department, the minister, and government have all looked at the experience with privatization of

long-term care in other provinces and they think P3's will save this Province money. Auditors General in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario report that P3 facilities have gone way over budget because of the high cost of private borrowing and the need to build in more profits.

I ask the Premier: Has he looked at all the evidence of the higher cost of constructing P3 facilities, or just what P3 proponents want him to see?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, we have clearly laid out a plan and we are confident in our plan. In doing so, in preparing for this major announcement, we looked at lots of evidence on all sides of the debate, all across the country, I say to the hon. member.

What is important to remember is that we are trying to address a real problem. We have people waiting for beds in hallways on stretchers in our hospitals. We have people sitting in emergency rooms.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. KENT:** We have cancelled surgeries occurring because there are people in acute care beds, that cost about \$50,000 a month to operate, that should not be there. That is why we are adding 360 more long-term care beds in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: Is he aware of reports showing that new P3 hospitals in Ontario are way over

budget and the cost has to be borne by government?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about a traditional P3 hospital. That is not what we are talking about. That may be what the House Leader of the NDP is talking about, but that –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. KENT:** I cannot hear; she is shouting at me, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. KENT:** Are you ready? Okay, she is ready now, Mr. Speaker, and now I have lost my train of thought.

What we are doing here is not a traditional P3 model. What we are doing is something that has existed in the Province for over a decade. It exists in every province in Canada. The private sector is active in the delivery of long-term care in every jurisdiction in this country, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Just one more piece of information: Are they aware of the fact that a facility in Montreal cost one billion dollars more than if it had been built by government?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi is talking

about large-scale acute care facilities. She is not talking about private sector involvement in long-term care, which exists in every province in Canada, including right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The savings, typically, is between 10 per cent and 20 per cent. So the private facility that is operating in Newfoundland and Labrador today is costing less than what it is costing us to operate the public beds, and it is providing the same quality of care at the same standards, providing the same service to seniors who need that care.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, our youth with complex needs are falling through the cracks at age sixteen when they age out of care, become homeless, or end up in horrifying, unsafe boarding houses – terrifying for them, and very costly to society.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to develop a concrete plan to prevent and end youth homelessness with actionable items, measurable targets, and a defined budget, as they did in Alberta, and for it to be ready by June 2016? Will he commit to this, Mr. Speaker?

**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 will echo the words from the Minister of AES, who I joined this morning at the forum that was held at City Hall, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health. It is a very important topic, and one that I take very seriously, as I am sure all our colleagues do on this side.

We made significant legislative enhancements back in 2011. The CYCP legislation will be reviewed in 2016. I can tell you, it is on our radar. I can tell you from a personal standpoint, as well as Minister of CYFS, and if I can be so

bold as to speak on behalf of everybody on this side, it is something we take very seriously. I think there are some things that we can do to further improve that, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They ask for a concrete plan.

I ask the Premier: Will he freeze the sale of all public land and buildings, including vacant schools, hospitals, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing assets, until government comes up with a housing strategy based on consultation –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS ROGERS:** – with municipalities and NGOs?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development for a quicker reply.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I have to point out to the member, she is not the only one who cares. We all care about the youth.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** We all care about our youth, and as I have said several times in this Question Period, Mr. Speaker, we will work with the parties to find the best way forward.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

[Technical difficulties]

The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Social Services Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services; the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; the Department of Health and Community Services; the Department of Justice and Public Safety; the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs; the Labour Relations Agency; the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation; and the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

The Estimates of the Office of Public Engagement are deemed passed in accordance with Standing Order 75(2).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

#### Notices of Motion

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 2, 2015.

Further, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 2, 2015.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2015.

Further, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2015.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice of the following motion:

WHEREAS following the imposition of the 1992 moratorium on Northern cod, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans assured inshore harvesters of the Province that upon the return of the resource the first 115,000 tons of 2J3KL cod would be allotted to the adjacent inshore harvesters; and

WHEREAS the Northern cod is showing a resurgence in numbers; and –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the current federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has shown contempt for the principle of adjacency;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge government to call for the federal minister to reaffirm the federal policy of returning the first 115,000 metric tons of Northern cod quota to the adjacent inshore harvesters of Newfoundland and Labrador, seconded by the Member for St. John's Centre.

I give notice, Mr. Speaker, this will be the private member's motion on this coming Wednesday.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for Which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

**MR. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition on health care in the St. George's and surrounding area. It is a petition that many members are quite familiar with because I presented it here before.

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

WHEREAS there is not a permanent doctor in the Town of St. George's; and

WHEREAS this absence of a permanent doctor is seriously compromising the health care of people who live in the town and surrounding areas 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 St. George's and surrounding area.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by a number of people from the St. George's area. At one point, St. George's had two doctors, now they do not have a permanent doctor at all. It is causing the people of St. George's and surrounding area – Flat Bay, St. Teresa's, those areas – who use that clinic in St. George's are having problems getting a consistency of care that they would need for good health.

Not to blow the situation out of proportion to say that there is a health care crisis in St. George's and the entire Stephenville-Bay St. George area. Jeffrey's, just down the road a little ways, have not had a doctor in their clinic for a year and a half now.

The people in St. George's have been over a half year now. They are looking at the situation in Jeffrey's and they are saying: Is that the faith we are going to have to endure for that long? They are wondering when this government is going to

find a solution that will help them get the health care services they need.

Mr. Speaker, the hospital in Stephenville, the waiting rooms are overcrowded. People from these areas travel to Stephenville and have to wait all day to get services that they cannot get in their own communities.

Also, you are seeing a downgrading of the services that are available at the hospital in Stephenville. Many people have expressed concerns about the downgrading of services under this government. It is a very serious problem and I am looking forward to government working to address this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. CROCKER:** 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 many communities in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde do not have cellphone coverage; and

WHEREAS residents of the district require cellphone coverage to ensure their safety and communications abilities; and

WHEREAS cellphone coverage on many portions of the highway in the district is poor or non-existent;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies to provide adequate cellphone coverage throughout the entire District of Trinity – Bay de Verde.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to stand and enter this petition on behalf of the residents of Trinity – Bay de Verde. I have entered this petition many times in the past four or five weeks, and I will continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker, it is time the government realize they have a role to play in cellphone coverage in our Province. We always hear the same thing from government, that it is a federal responsibility. There is no one who disputes the fact it is a federal responsibility, but it is the responsibility of the government to protect the safety of the travelling public throughout our Province, in many regions of the Province. I heard the Member for Burgeo – La Poile time after time enter a very similar petition, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair the same.

In the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde, Mr. Speaker, we have four not-for-profit ambulance services that travel mainly on Route 74 and Route 70. On neither of these routes is there adequate cellphone coverage.

We have the newly implemented 911 system. Every person in the Province with a cellphone today, when they get their bill they are going to see a line, 911 service fee, seventy-five cents. Mr. Speaker, we pay for a service that most people with cellphones in my district, and many districts throughout the Province, cannot avail of. So we pay the seventy-five cents month after month after month with still no ability to avail of the cellphone service.

Mr. Speaker, we look at Bay de Verde and Old Perlican in the summer months, in the fishing season. We have hundreds of crews from all over the Province, not just Trinity – Bay de Verde or not just the Bay de Verde Peninsula, who are landing in Old Perlican and Bay de Verde. They come into these ports with no way to use their cellphones, to communicate back home, and to communicate to the plants as they come in.

It inhibits business development. When you look at business development and rural economic development throughout the Province, Mr. Speaker, without adequate cellphone coverage in 2015, it is an inhibitor to business

and economic development throughout the Province.

The government just does not get. Just last week, the Member for Lake Melville gets up and says it is fine for the people in cities to have cellphone coverage, but –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the member his time is expired.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be back tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the citizens serviced by Curtis Hospital located in St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Labrador, petition the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador-Grenfell Health to retain the midwives and allow them to continue to perform all of their duties at Curtis Hospital.

Our midwives offer services that cannot be duplicated and which cannot be replaced. The level of care they offer and the knowledge and training they have in the area of obstetrics is immense. It will be a great disservice to the people of this area if our midwives are no longer available to care for the people here. Privatizing midwifery or waiting five to seven years for regulation, as stated by the government, is unacceptable. We have an operation model of midwifery here in St. Anthony that has been delivering outstanding care for over ninety years.

We urge the House of Assembly to implore the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador-Grenfell Health to preserve our midwifery services at Curtis Hospital.

This is signed by a number of constituents from Anchor Point, Sandy Cove, Eddies Cove,

Flower's Cove, Green Island Cove, and Forrester's Point who are speaking out on this matter. I had the opportunity to go and connect with constituents door to door in St. Anthony over the weekend, and a number of them raised concerns over health care and how midwifery services have been cut.

This is a government that has put more focus on harness racing and regulating that than it has on midwifery, on obstetrics. You talk about a government that wants to grow a population and talk about providing the appropriate level of care for women and families when it comes to midwives, it has been a proven fact that when it comes to low-risk pregnancies that this whole process of the pre and postnatal care is a direction that other provinces are taking and moving in regulation. After meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary for Health and the person who is responsible for midwifery, it is very clear that government has prioritized privatization and that it will be five to seven years before it is returned back to the public setting.

This is completely unacceptable when what we had in St. Anthony has been working, and it is just another service that the current government has taken away from the residents of St. Anthony and the people of the Great Northern Peninsula and Southern Labrador, and I say it is completely shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am standing on a point of clarification.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Just prior –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Sorry.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no provision for the member to stand on a point of clarification.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I will stand on a point of order.

**MR. SPEAKER:** What is the member's point of order?

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Just prior to the petitions, the Member for –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Port de Grave.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** – Port de Grave stood and mentioned the Social Services Committee having been passed without amendment, and I am looking at the Standing Orders here, specifically Standing Order 75(2), which says “All estimates not selected for consideration by the respective Standing Committee on Estimates shall be deemed to be passed by the Committee and reported back to the House at the conclusion of the 15 day period.”

Now, specifically we are referring to the Estimates for the Office of Public Engagement, which was listed and was supposed to be done here in the House, and would fall under Social Services. So, I would ask for the Speaker's consideration of why that particular section is not being done in the House of Assembly under Social Services as it was listed, and can you report back on it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Government House Leader, speaking to the point or order?

**MR. KING:** Yes.

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member references the referencing out of the Office of Public Engagement, and he is correct; it was referred out. A time was provided – three hours was provided along with the Department of Health to do those Estimates, but just to remind the member, we have been very clear here that – I am not sure what the process is, but procedurally we are fine with leave to debate Office of Public Engagement either through the Committee process or through open debate in the House through the Executive Council debate at the end, if that helps clarify.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, speaking to the point of order.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the offer from the Government House Leader. Unfortunately though, the purpose of Estimates is it allows an opportunity to ask questions having all the staff of each department there, which we would not be able to do if we do it in the normal Committee stage. So unfortunately we would not be able to give leave for that particular request.

The critic, particularly, would like an opportunity to ask questions of that department. Again, I appreciate the fact that it was done during Health; but as we all know, Health took three hours, and there was no opportunity for the critic to ask questions under that particular heading, which he should have been availed the right.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

There is no point of order.

Orders of the Day.

#### Orders of the Day

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, Motion 7, pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn 5:30 p.m. today, Monday, June 1, 2015.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the House not adjourn today at 5:30 p.m.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Further, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, Motion 8, pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today, Monday, June 1, 2015.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that this House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today.

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 again, Mr. Speaker.

I would like now to call from the Order Paper, Order 3, Concurrence Motion, and we will deal with (a), the Government Services Committee.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the report of the Government Services Committee be concurred in.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FORSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is nice to get the opportunity to actually speak about the Budget Estimates and the exercise and the process that we go through because it is quite lengthy. It is nice sometimes to get the opportunity to explain it and let the people know a lot of the things they do not see that actually happen here in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Government Services Committee was made up of – and I will thank the Committee members. The Committee members were: the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde, the Member for Kilbride, the Member for Mount Pearl South, the Member for St. John's East, the Member for Cape St. Francis, and the Member for Bellevue.

Mr. Speaker, each department that comes under a certain heading, like Government Services, we dealt with the Department of Finance, the Public Service Commission, the Government Purchasing Agency, the Department of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Department of Transportation and Works.

It is great we can sit in, we can review it, and questions can be asked of the ministers and the staff, but also we would not be able to do it without the Clerks. I just wanted to publicly thank the Clerks for the work that they do and basically, I guess, keeping us on the straight and narrow and making sure that we are doing it the right way. I appreciate that and I guess every now and then they look at me as Chair and wonder what I am doing, but it does not take long and they straighten me out right away, so it is not bad.

Mr. Speaker, under Concurrence and the departments that we had to deal with, there are quite a few issues, expenditures, revenues, and so on; but before I do, I got a nice word today from the Botwood Collegiate for their robotics team. Mr. Speaker, I know it is probably near and dear to you as well because I think the present principal of that school, you know him quite well. They finished the twenty-first skills national competition in Saskatoon. They took the silver medal nationally.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FORSEY:** As I was saying, just for the information first before I get into some of the details, we reviewed the Public Service Commission which came under Government Services. Included under Public Service Commission are the Executive and Support Services, Financial Planning and Benefits, Taxation and Fiscal Policy, and Economic and Statistics Branch.

Some of the things that come under the Public Service Commission – Service NL. A lot of people know about Service NL because we deal with it a lot. The minister is always certainly in the public announcing one thing or another for sure under Service NL. There are quite a few lines that come under his department such as: pensions come under his department, Motor Registration, Vital Statistics, Queen's Printer,

Occupational Health and Safety, and permitting and inspection services. So it is quite a few pieces of information, Mr. Speaker, to review under just the one government department.

Two of the ones that are really interesting under Government Services, Mr. Speaker, are Transportation and Works and Finance. Finance naturally takes in – I guess encompasses all of the Budget. Transportation and Works looks after many things as well. They look after the purchasing of professional services. They look after the cost of supplies and fuel. They look after buildings and contract requirements for buildings, snow removal, so many different things.

When we were going through it, we were talking about somebody says, well, we need to get this bit of road done, we need to get that bit of road done. We need a ferry. We have a problem with – so they look after roads. They look after ferries.

Just listening to the minister when he was responding to some of the questions – 10,000 kilometres of roads under his department in this Province that he has to be responsible for, and this government has to be responsible. It is not an easy task. It is not an easy task for the minister. It is not an easy task for the government, when you have 10,000 kilometres of roads and 1,300 bridges in the Province.

Then he also has the air services, the water bombers, the marine services. There are so many different expenses and so many needs from the different people in the Province, and rightfully so, but sometimes it can be a challenge, Mr. Speaker. That is why, in the past few years, we have invested so heavily in infrastructure, in ferries, in roads, and in bridges. It is actually mind-boggling really, when you think about how much money is required just to upgrade the roads, the bridges, the ferries, and also the schools.

Everything comes under Transportation and Works. All of the schools, the buildings. When I sit back and I think about it, it was not that long ago when we were standing up and listening to the Opposition and the people across the way saying: What are you going to do with this school? What are you going to do with that

school? There is mould in this one, there is mould in that one. There is mould in the other school. There were that many mould issues it is a wonder we got out of it as well as we did, Mr. Speaker, but we were very fortunate. We were able to make the investments.

I recall, just in the District of Exploits, Mr. Speaker, we were very fortunate to be able to bring in free textbooks, eliminate the school fees, and then we had to upgrade the schools. We brought in the skilled trades in all of the high schools. Then we also had to do a lot of repairs and upgrades to the buildings, and a lot of it with new schools, Mr. Speaker.

Just in the District of Exploits alone in the past three years, I believe every school in the district had to have roof repairs. It cost anywhere between \$300,000 and \$500,000. It is not cheap, but it had to be done. We are going to give our students the proper facility and safe place to go and be able to learn, and learn without having to worry about mould or learn without having to worry about water coming in their classrooms and so on, Mr. Speaker. I think our government has invested, and invested wisely. Some people may say differently, that it was a waste, but I cannot see how it was a waste when our children are our best asset.

I listened to the Minister of Seniors today. He made a Ministerial Statement and he was also questioned on some things. What is really interesting is over the weekend, and not only over the weekend but for the past several weeks actually, the Budget, of course, is probably not first and foremost in people's minds, but it may be in the top five, and people wanted to discuss it.

For me, what was surprising was there were people saying: Clayton, what about your Poverty Reduction Strategy? You guys have a fantastic Poverty Reduction Strategy. You really do not get that information out there enough and make people aware of what is happening.

I listened to the minister today when he made his statement; \$ 1.2 billion in our Poverty Reduction Strategy since 2006. I said it earlier when I was speaking, either last week or the week before, that back then I remember getting calls from a university in Alberta, people I knew, and they

were really interested in how we were doing so well and what the strategy was all about and how we did it. They were really impressed. It put us second to none in the country, Mr. Speaker.

So people get up and they say: What did you do with the money? Where is the money? You kept spending the money; \$185 million for Poverty Reduction Strategy initiatives designed to prevent, reduce, and alleviate poverty bringing the total investment – what I just said – to \$1.2 billion. That \$185 million was in this year's Budget, Mr. Speaker.

Included in that, of course, a lot of the funding under the seniors department as well goes towards low income and seniors' benefits. Mr. Speaker, 2015 increased the Low Income Seniors' Benefit by \$1.7 million for a total of \$42.1 million in this year's Budget.

The drug program again, the NLPDP, provides financial assistance for the purchase of eligible prescription medications under five different plans. One such plan is the 65Plus Plan. The plan provides coverage of eligible prescription drugs to residents sixty-five years of age and older who receive Old Age Security Benefits and the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Individuals under this program may pay a maximum dispensing fee of \$6 per prescription covered drugs, and about 3,000 people avail of this program at the cost of \$46 million, Mr. Speaker.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Money well spent.

**MR. FORSEY:** Money well spent, absolutely.

I know I discussed the program for the Provincial Home Support Program, which has not changed, and the low-income seniors' tax benefit, which has not changed. Some people seem to think that was changed somewhere along the way, but this is a maximum of \$1,059 which go to seniors. It is a seniors' tax benefit. It comes out every fall, Mr. Speaker, and it is certainly well received, but also well needed by the seniors and at a good time in the fall of the year when things start to get cold and they need some extra heating costs.

Also, what the minister was speaking on – and I was at a volunteer recognition night on Friday night in Point Leamington and they were talking about the same thing as the minister was talking about today: the Healthy Aging Policy Framework, the provincial advisory council on seniors, the age-friendly programs, and the Healthy Aging Research Program.

The age-friendly grants, over \$1 million in the past five years – our government has invested more \$1 million to promote the importance of healthy aging and help create more age-friendly communities.

Mr. Speaker, when you get out in the communities and sit down with the seniors and sit down with the volunteers and they talk about what is happening and the funds they are getting for these projects, it is really heartwarming because they are getting out there and they are getting the exercise that they need and they have been able to do it because of initiatives by this government.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing: I have to touch on that one as well while I am at the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Mr. Speaker, \$68 million invested in an affordable housing agreement for the next five years, which will provide \$27 million over the next five years to create 500 more new affordable housing units, the majority of which will assist seniors. The remaining \$41 million will help fund the Provincial Home Repair Program. About 86 per cent of people assisted under this program are seniors with low incomes, Mr. Speaker.

So are we doing things for seniors? Of course we are, because seniors are near and dear to all of us. I am sure everybody in the House here feels the same way and wants to help as much as they can for seniors, without a doubt.

The Rent Supplement Program, Residential Energy Efficiency Program, and the Provincial Home Repair Program which I just mentioned – there was \$6.4 million last year through the Provincial Home Repair Program to help about 1,700 clients. In the past eight years, 18,622 grants were provided to low-income homeowners to make needed repairs to their homes. About 86 per cent of people helped under this program are low-income seniors.

Mr. Speaker, when I got elected ten years ago I recall getting a lot of calls and a lot of requests, people wanting to get their homes repaired. They could get up to a \$5,000 grant. They could also get a loan for so much at a very affordable repayment schedule. The calls were rather disturbing sometimes because we could not get the applications all approved. There was quite a few of them. The same thing was happening with other issues with drug costs, dental programs, and things like that. I was getting a lot of calls.

Recently, in the past year or two, the calls are certainly much, much less because our government decided we are going to invest in the Provincial Home Repair Program. We want the seniors to stay in their own homes so we want them to be able to upgrade their houses, install new windows, get more insulation in them, and whatever it takes for them to be able to afford to stay in their own homes. Therefore, we were able to do that. It was great, we all wanted to do it, and it was done. It was not a waste – I do not think it was a waste by no means, but it was certainly a great investment for our seniors and certainly well received by them as well.

Like I said, the calls now are nowhere near what they were even, say, five years ago because of the strategy that we had and the plan that we had. The people out there know this, Mr. Speaker, and I think we have done very well under a government to be able to pick the proper areas and places to spend the money.

Yes, there are always needs, there are needs for all kinds of things in the Province, and it can range from health care right down to a piece of road; but I can certainly say that if I had to go back just to the District of Exploits and talk about the investments there, the need today is not like it was ten years ago –

**MR. RUSSELL:** Not even close.

**MR. FORSEY:** You are right, I say to the Member for Lake Melville; it is not even close.

It was mind-boggling when I was elected ten years ago; I looked at a request that was there from the district and what needed to be done in roadwork. I think it was something over \$35

million or \$40 million; what needed to be done in municipal infrastructure was something like well over \$30 million as well.

This year, Mr. Speaker, certainly the amount of the requests and the total requests are nowhere near that anymore. Is it wonderful? Yes, I think it is great because I think the people of Exploits benefitted by that, and I am glad that I was one of the government members to be able to deliver to the district the way that we have as a government and the way that I was able to do it in the District of Exploits.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and hopefully get a chance to talk again, but this is under the Concurrence for Government Services and it is great to be able to pass this without amendments.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly an honour to stand in my place again today and speak on Concurrence. In particular, I want to speak to the Department of Service NL which falls under this, and more specifically – because we can speak to anything we want under there – I just want to go back to some of the things that I have raised in the past, and actually last week even, the whole concept around blue zone parking. I want to take an opportunity just to speak to that a little. Mr. Speaker, specifically I want to reference a report that came out – it is dated April 22 of this year and it is report that was issued by the Citizens' Representative. It was based on a complaint around blue zone parking.

I would say, first of all, I think it is a sad state of affairs that it takes a citizen to have to bring an issue such as this in our so-called inclusive society, our inclusive Newfoundland and Labrador, it is disappointing that a citizen would have to bring this issue to the Citizens' Rep to begin with.

Certainly we do know that we continue to have challenges around blue zone parking legislation. Legislation which was brought before this House approximately three years ago and three years later, we continue to be talking about it because we continue to have non-compliance to the blue zone legislation.

We continue to have non-compliance as it relates not just to private businesses, which I am going to talk about in a little bit, but we continue to have non-compliance in government's own facilities. When we are talking government-owned facilities, we are talking about facilities such as this, the Confederation Building, and places like Motor Registration, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and the workers' comp building. We are also talking about schools. We are also talking about clinics. We are also talking about places like universities and College of the North Atlantic and all those places.

We are also talking about Crown agencies, like the Liquor Corporation and so on. We are talking about facilities, some facilities which government own outright, and we are also talking about other facilities where government is leasing space from a private owner of a facility and they are leasing that space and they have a government office there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I guess I was a little bit encouraged, to some degree – and I say that somewhat loosely – that in terms of some of the government facilities and government buildings, we did a little better than I thought we would do. Basically, in this report the Citizens' Rep, the investigator and so on visited a number of government-owned facilities throughout the St. John's metro region. Primarily St. John's, pretty much exclusively St. John's – no, that is not true. Primarily St. John's, but there are a half a dozen here in Mount Pearl of government-owned facilities.

The compliance rate, in terms of full compliance to blue zone legislation – when we talk about full compliance we are talking about having blue zone spaces as per the legislation, the guidelines, having blue zone spaces which are of the appropriate width, having the appropriate curb cut-downs, having them painted blue and so on, with the symbol on it, as we are all familiar

with. In addition to that, to have the permanent signage, to have a permanent sign for every single blue zone space, which is the case within the legislation and the guidelines – that is what is required.

Of the sampling that was done here for government-owned facilities, in terms of full compliance, there were forty-three checked and thirty were in full compliance. So thirty out of forty-three for compliance rate of 70 per cent.

There are some people who will say well, 70 per cent, that is not bad. That is a reasonable number. When you look at the fact that, first of all, the legislation was brought in some three or three-and-a-half years ago, when you look at the fact, the last couple of years for sure, the Official Opposition has continued to ask questions and raise this issue about these non-compliance issues, raise them in the House of Assembly and in the media and social media and so on, and we have had disability advocates doing the same thing, given the pressure that has been put to bear, we are still only at 70 per cent.

So while you might say 70 per cent is not bad, based on the fact that it is our own legislation – and this is government. These are public facilities, we have to remember. This is the government itself, their facilities, we are at 70 per cent in St. John's, and that certainly is a problem. It is a big problem. We talk about government should be leading by example. We should be at 100 per cent when it comes to having appropriate access for our citizens to access our government facilities, to visit our government offices and whatever the case, to do whatever business they have to do.

What is even more disturbing is that part of this report, the investigator with the Citizens' Rep office actually checked a few places outside of St. John's – and there were only a few – but of the sampling that was taken outside St. John's, this was primarily Corner Brook, there was one there in Port aux Basques, one in Stephenville, one in Happy Valley-Goose Bay – do you know what the compliance rate was for that, Mr. Speaker?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What?

**MR. LANE:** Zero – a compliance rate of zero.

In other words, of the sampling outside the St. John's area, every government facility that they checked for compliance to government's own blue zone legislation, to provide access for persons with disabilities to give them appropriate parking space, zero compliance. There was not one that was in compliance. That is very, very disturbing to say the least.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they also took a look at private facilities. So these would be private businesses – and again we have to remember we are talking legislation here; we are talking the law. This is not it would be nice to be in compliance, it would be great if you actually had some spaces for persons with disabilities to park to go into your business and so on. This is not a nice to do; this is the law.

We had in the greater St. John's area – and in this particular case, there were forty-three businesses. The vast majority are St. John's, three in Kilbride, which is still considered St. John's, three in Goulds, three in Mount Pearl, and the rest were St. John's proper. Of those forty-three businesses, in terms of businesses being in full compliance, eighteen, which is 42 per cent. So only 42 per cent of the sample of businesses in the St. John's area that were taken, only 42 per cent were in full compliance.

Now again, these are not my numbers. This is the Citizens' Representative – also known as the Ombudsman – appointed by government so that citizens have a vehicle in which to bring forward concerns that are not being addressed by a government. This independent investigation by this independent agency that we all look up to, to deal with these types of matters, the Citizens' Rep indicated in terms of full compliance, 42 per cent. That is a shocking number in this day and age – a shocking number. This was in the St. John's area.

The Citizens' Rep, as part of their investigation, did not go outside of the St. John's area in terms of the private business piece. If we were apply, I suppose, the same trending, if you will – that in the St. John's area, which is the seat of government, you could argue it is where you would expect to have the highest levels of compliance.

When you consider the fact we were 70 per cent compliant in terms of government buildings and zero per cent compliant in the sampling taken outside of St. John's, then I would think we can probably say, without the study being done – but I can tell you anecdotally, when I have been to Gander, Grand Falls, Clarendville, and some of these places over the last year or so, a couple of years since I have been raising this issue, I sort of took it upon myself to drive around and check some of these places. I would suggest the compliance rate is very low. I would say, like the government one, if we were to actually go and check outside the St. John's metro area, likely the 42 per cent is going to be lower again than the 42 per cent.

This is very troubling to say the least, Mr. Speaker. We have raised this time and time again in the House of Assembly. We cannot seem to get anywhere with it, and I do not understand why. For the life of me, I do not understand why. In the report, it just basically says in response to the low numbers in government-owned facilities. Basically, the response from the department is we are going to make it a priority and we are going to send something out to all of the agencies and so on to try to address this.

Mr. Speaker, that is the same thing we have been told time and time again in the House of Assembly, but nothing has changed. It is very troubling when you look at some of the places that are not in compliance, like the Health Sciences Centre is here. The L.A. Miller Centre is here. Eastern Health, Rowan Centre is here. Some of these, when you talk about it, and I know for a fact – I do not see St. Clare's Hospital here, so maybe it was not part of that particular sample. Obviously, it was not, it is not here. I know for a fact, unless it has been changed recently, that St. Clare's Hospital is not in compliance either.

We are talking public facilities, like hospitals, where people are going on a fairly regular basis. A lot of those people may have disabilities and so on. They may be using wheelchairs or whatever the case might be. Whether it is because they have a disability that requires it or they are just sick, going through sickness and so on and they are not able to walk and they require that. We do not even have compliance there.

There is something not right with it. I do not know why it is not as simple as getting it done. I cannot understand why, for example, the Minister of Health cannot simply say to the health authorities: boys, it is not rocket science. Figure out how many blue zones you are supposed to have, paint them blue, and stick a sign in the ground. It is really not that complicated.

The Minister of Education, you are required to have a blue zone or a couple of blue zones, paint a – here is the diagram. Here is how wide it has to be. Here is how high the sign has to be. It is all there. It is clearly there. It is on the government website. It is the brochure, get her done. We have been talking about it now for three years, get her done. I do not understand what the big deal is.

When it comes to the private businesses, the Citizens' Rep has made that recommendation, and said it is a problem. They said there are not enough resources, which we have said all along. There is one person for the entire Avalon Peninsula. That person is dealing with the new builds in terms of permits and all that kind of stuff when someone is building a new property as well. Now they have to handle complaints and they also have to – so obviously the resources are not there, and the Citizens' Rep has said that. The government's response is, basically, we do not have the money to do it.

I know we are going through tough financial times now. We all recognize that, but this has been on the go since three years ago when money was not an issue, so to speak. It is always an issue, but before the oil rock bottomed we had been talking about it, and it was not resourced then.

We are talking about persons with disabilities. When we talk about persons with disabilities, we have to recognize that could be anybody. That could be our relatives, our parents, our grandparents, or it could be some people who are born with a particular disability, but there are other people who develop a disability. They have a stroke or they come down with MS, or whatever the case might be. They are in wheelchairs or they have mobility issues, and that could be any one of us.

All this is about is ensuring we have proper access for these people. I do not understand for the life of me, in this day and age, supposed to be an inclusive society, why we would not get it done; why we would still have government facilities that are not in compliance for people with a disability who needs to avail of government facilities and so on, or schools, or hospitals, or whatever the case might be. I do not understand it.

I am sure my colleagues across the way would agree. They could have family members, or constituents, or friends, or it could be them tomorrow. It could be me tomorrow. I know they want people with disabilities to have access to all of these facilities. I know they do, we all do, but they are subject to, I guess the same as we all are to some degree, that we have departments and ministers who are making these decisions, or not making these decisions, to get these things at rest. As a result, we are all in the same boat in terms of it not getting done.

We know we have constituents and so on who do not have access. There are some people who would call it discrimination, and it really is. We have a hospital or a school or whatever, and my child can go to the school, not a problem, or someone working at the school, but someone with a disability: boy, I am sorry, tough luck; that is all you can do.

It is not good enough, Mr. Speaker, and there is no big cost. I am sure we can get a deal on some blue paint somewhere. I am sure we can.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** On what?

**MR. LANE:** Some blue paint and put up a few signs. It is not hard to do. It is not expensive to do. I do not understand why it is not being done. It is just not being made a priority, or it is not being communicated properly or effectively or something. I do not know. I do not understand it, but we have to do better.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a minute-and-a-half-or-so left, so just to stay on that same topic, or a topic similar to it, and I raised this in Question Period, is the fines. If somebody decides they are going to disregard a blue zone and they are going to park in a blue zone when they do not have a permit, they do not belong there, and

taking that space away from someone who requires that space, there has to be a penalty. It has to be a strong deterrent to make that happen.

We passed legislation in this House of Assembly. It was supposed to beef up those fines. Instead of going with a \$400 fine as was recommended certainly by people in the disability community – instead of doing that, no, we put in a range of \$100 to \$400.

Thankfully, the City of St. John's was the first off the mark to show leadership. They raised their fines to \$400 because now it is up to the municipalities to decide on their own what they want to do, if they want to do it. St. John's thankfully, \$400. Mount Pearl followed suit shortly thereafter and I believe Corner Brook has now as well, but to my knowledge nobody else has.

So you have \$400 fines in those particular municipalities, but everywhere else it is \$100. Then if you get into other places like MUN, they can set their own fines. They are at \$20. A gentleman told me the other day there are people parking in blue zones because it is cheaper to take a chance on a \$20 ticket than it is to be feeding the metre all day. That is absolutely ridiculous and we are not doing enough to prevent it.

These things can be dealt with. It needs to be dealt with. We are going to keep on talking about it until government takes action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn):** The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity. It is my pleasure to stand in my place this afternoon and speak for a few minutes about the Government Services Committee, and some of the issues mainly from the Department of Transportation and Works as they affect the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde.

Mr. Speaker, since becoming an MHA back in late 2014, one of the main issues or some of the main issues that come through my office in Heart's Content daily are issues surrounding road maintenance on the three main roads that we have in the district: Routes 80, 70, and 74. One of the huge issues surrounds summer maintenance or the lack thereof in recent years. The problems that summer maintenance creates become a much larger issue. When we look back at storms, like Igor and we had roads and stuff washing out – and damages still in the district today from Igor that have not been fixed.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that government really take summer maintenance seriously. I have calls daily – I responded to a gentleman just this morning in the community of New Chelsea who called and has a ditching issue on his property. This problem had been going on before Igor, still with no resolution whatsoever.

In the Town of Heart's Delight-Islington, the sides of Route 80 through the community are treacherous to try to walk on. There are washouts that have been there for years and years, with no resolution to it whatsoever. Post Office Road in Red Head Cove, Mr. Speaker, was another call I had this morning from a constituent. That road has not been graded for two seasons, with no ditching.

The section of Route 80 from Hant's Harbour to Winterton is absolutely deplorable. It is one of the worst sections of road in my district. I presented a petition last week from the residents with regard to the condition of that road, Mr. Speaker. It really needs some work.

The other issue that has come to my attention, and it is an issue that the town council of Old Perlican has raised for a couple of years now, deals with the busy intersection where Route 80 and Route 74 come together in Old Perlican with heavy traffic. The crossroads going into Old Perlican, Bay de Verde, the North Shore of Conception Bay, and the Town of Old Perlican is extremely busy this time of year, with hundreds of tractor trailers on a weekly basis. These tractor trailers, in lots of cases, are coming from out of Province and they are going into Old Perlican late at night. They are not being warned that they are coming to a crossroad. It is very much a concern for the

residents of Old Perlican. I have spoken to the minister's staff and I have spoken to the minister about it. I hope it is something that we can have rectified this coming season.

Another issue that is arising now on the tip of the Bay de Verde Peninsula with the heavy traffic – we have hundreds of people working in Bay de Verde in the processing industry, hundreds in Old Perlican, and they are working twelve-hour shifts. They are leaving work late at night or early in the morning, and anybody who is familiar with the tip of the Bay de Verde Peninsula knows that fog is often a concern. The lines, the road markings, are gone, from the winter season. Again, we encourage the government to get the paint crews there as soon as possible to ensure that these lines are put back in place before we have an accident.

The thing is we have all this heavy traffic going through the district, often late at night. It is when tractor trailers seem to want to work because I guess they avoid the rest of the traffic, so a lot of the heavy traffic in the district is late at night.

Mr. Speaker, we look also at the Heart's Content Barrens and the government did pave a section of the Heart's Content Barrens last construction season, but in that part of the construction season some of the shoulders of the road on the Heart's Content Barrens were left kind of narrow. That is another issue that I would hope that the government will address this coming season.

The issue of brush cutting, Mr. Speaker, there is quite a number of sides of the roads throughout the district that still require brush cutting. Even though it is not a part of the district – the New Harbour Strait is what we call it from the people who live on Route 80. It is a part of Route 80 that is really known for moose, and the brush there is absolutely terrible. It actually falls in the District of Bellevue, I think, but people in my district travel this portion of Route 80 on a very regular basis, and brush cutting is long, long overdue.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about summer maintenance in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde, if you trace it back, you go back through the years to find out when the issues really

started with summer maintenance, they lead back to one thing. They lead back to a decision of government, sometime back in the early 2000s, to close the highways depot in Heart's Content. Once that depot closed on a seasonal basis – it still operates as a winter depot, but the closure of that depot creates a situation where the only other depot in the district is located in Flambro Head or very close to the community of Lower Island Cove.

In order for a crew to leave Lower Island Cove and to do summer maintenance in, let's say, Hopeall, which is the upper limit to the south of the district, you are looking at a ninety-minute drive for heavy equipment. Maybe even a little longer if you are moving backhoes and other slower moving pieces of equipment. It makes it very hard for the crews to get out and get the work done.

These guys are hard-working men and women, but we need to give them the equipment and the ability and the funding to get the work done, Mr. Speaker. With the amount of roads and traffic on Route 80, 74, and 70, we can certainly support two year-round highway depots.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon when you talk about transportation, I stood in the House a while back this afternoon and presented a petition on cellphone coverage, or the lack thereof, on the highways throughout the district and I ran out of time; but I am never going to miss an opportunity in this House to talk about cellphone coverage because I know how important it is to the people in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon when I ran out of time when I was speaking, I was speaking about the idea of the federal government's role in providing cellphone coverage in the Province and government's failure to recognize that they have role to play as well. It is time for government to realize they need to get to the table with the feds on this issue. There are many other issues we need to get to the table with, but this is one that so affects the safety of the people travelling the roads in my district and many districts throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I referenced brush cutting, I referenced Route 74. The other issue that has

arisen over the last couple of weeks in the district is very much the amount of debris and stuff that has found its way to the sides of the road over the winter. I know this coming weekend Transportation and Works will have crews on the Outer Ring Road cleaning up the garbage and the litter on the Outer Ring Road, and I realize the importance of the Outer Ring Road being a gateway, but, Mr. Speaker, coming in last night from my district to the city, I counted two mattresses and I think it was three couches from Whitbourne to St. John's.

**MS DEMPSTER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** I say to the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, you probably could move in.

Mr. Speaker, we need a collective responsibility, not only on the Outer Ring Road – I realize the Outer Ring Road needs to be cleaned up but there are other roads that fall under the responsibility of the Department of Transportation and Works as well that need attention.

Mr. Speaker, these are some issues I wanted to raise this afternoon when it comes to my own district and the Department of Transportation and Works. I will probably get an opportunity again later this afternoon to get up, but for right now, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will take my place.

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

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

It is indeed a privilege to get up here again today and speak to the good people of Newfoundland and Labrador and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing here today, we all sit on committees, most of us here on the backbench sit on committees anyway. We go to Estimates, and usually Estimates last for about three hours. It gives opportunity – I just want to let you know what we are doing – for the Opposition parties basically to question different departments in government. For a person like

myself, I find it very interesting because there is a lot of information that is passed back and forth.

It is a time that you get into, we will say, the nitty-gritty of the Budget and to see why there are increases in spending, why this has decreased, and the reason for different things added on that were not there the year before or whatever. So it is a time when ministers really have to be on their Ps & Qs, we will say. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, I have sat in on a lot of them and I really have to say I am very impressed with how well versed our ministers are and how they answer all the questions.

While they do have a great staff – and most of them do. They count on their staff obviously to do what they are doing. It is pretty interesting when you watch the ministers do it. They answer all the questions like they have because they are coming for three hours. When you are doing what they call line items, it is discussing why there was a change in what was revised Budget to the actual Budget and stuff like this. It is pretty interesting. Sometimes when you are here for three hours in the nighttime you yawn a little bit every now and then. Not that I do, I saw a few other members do it. It is very interesting.

What we are doing here today is we are doing the service industry. Our Chair was the Member for Exploits. He did a great job. He did a great job because he – sometimes you can get into asking some policy questions that really should not be asked at Estimates because it has nothing to do with what we are doing there. Sometimes that changes. They are like yourself; you have to keep everything in order.

With ours, we looked at different departments. We looked at the Department of Finance and we looked at the Public Service Commission. We also looked at Government Purchasing. We did Service NL, which is a huge department. I am going to talk about each one of them a little bit now, and we did the Department of Transportation and Works.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to first start off with basically the Finance department and talk a little bit – and once you talk about the Finance department, obviously you can go on and talk

about everything that is in the Budget. That is where the Finance Minister and his, I call them a team, put the Budget together, which is the whole thing for all departments. When you talk about the Budget, the Finance department basically deals with everything that is in the Budget there and where we are spending things and where we are not spending things.

This year's Budget is a Budget of balancing choices and trying to make the choices proper so that we can have a great future for our families, and making sure that Newfoundland and Labrador continues on the path that we are continuing on. It is a great success as far as I am concerned.

Sometimes when you are a Finance Minister you really have a huge job to do because obviously it is like the same as your household, you have so much money coming in and you have so much money going out. You have to be able to budget everything so at the end of the year you are not in a dilemma that you cannot afford to do the things you want to do. So, this year, if you look at our Budget, obviously the oil prices had a huge effect on the amount of revenue we have coming into our Province.

When you go back and look at times in our history – and this is not something that just happens every now and then. If you look in 2003, our finances were in rough shape, very rough shape. The government at the time – I am not blaming anyone. I am not saying anyone who is here or anything, but the government at the time had to make some choices, and choices that could affect the future of our Province. Obviously, choices made back in 2003, if you look at what happened over the number of years, were good choices, because as far as I am concerned Newfoundland and Labrador is in a whole lot better place.

If you go back to 2008, and you look at the economy around the world, at that time they called it a housing crisis down in the United States. It seemed like everything went boom, down like that. The rest of Canada, everybody was in dire straits. There were a lot of job losses, and there was a lot of stress on a lot of different – but Newfoundland and Labrador did pretty good. We came through it. We invested

a lot of money in infrastructure, spent a lot of things.

It was almost like we did not feel the effects that other places did. Our housing market stayed strong. The economy stayed – we grew, actually. We did really, really well. We are in that kind of situation again, where things are not that good with the oil prices, but I am hoping, and everybody else is hoping they will come back up again, and the revenues will come.

Our whole economy – I look at areas around where I am from, I do not see a lot of slowdown, really. Like when I got up there a little while ago, I talked about the construction on Torbay Road and stuff like that. There are new buildings going up down there. I went in to Harvey's the other day, I noticed another couple of new buildings in there on what we call Field's Meadows. So it seems like the construction phase – and you look at housing starts in the communities are really good. The towns seem like they are doing very well. So I think the overall economy in the Province is doing pretty good.

Mr. Speaker, you have to have a plan. The Minister of Finance put forth his plan, and that is what we talked about in Estimates. We talked about a lot of things the Finance Department were investing money in, and we have to make plans.

I know today in Question Period there were a few questions asked about long-term care. I just want to touch a little bit on that, because it is an important part of this Budget. Mr. Speaker, as an MHA, we always get calls from residents with loved ones who need to go to nursing homes, or they need long-term care. The biggest one you hear a lot of these days is Alzheimer's and dementia, and stuff like that. Families do their best. They do their best to try to keep their loved ones at home. They do their best to try to take care of them.

I know from my own personal experience, I went through the same thing myself. It is very, very difficult to do what you have to do. You almost make a promise to your parents and whatever, listen here, you took care of me then I will take care of you type thing, and sometimes it gets to the point that you know you need the

professional help that is involved in these homes and stuff like that.

It is really hard on the families. It seems like we have people who are living a lot longer these days, so it is important that we have to make sure we have a plan – and that is what we are doing. We are putting a plan forward to make sure that we have something in place because, like I said, we are aging, our population is aging, and there is going to be more people who need this help.

With the long-term strategy that this government and the Minister of Finance and the whole government, Cabinet and everything came forward with, I thought was a great plan. It is a great plan because it is going to create 360 new beds. What that does – and I know sometimes no matter what you do, there will never be anything that you will do that will come up and say that is the perfect plan. That is the perfect situation. That is going to fix everything. There is not one thing I can find wrong with that.

The Opposition asks questions about it every day, but it is a plan that we have to do move forward with. We really have to have those beds. We have to make sure that we take care of our seniors. We have to make sure that there is something there for them because what is happening, Mr. Speaker – and I experienced it and I would say everyone in this House has experienced going to the emergency and seeing people in the corridors, and seeing people waiting for beds upstairs; having calls from constituents saying listen, so and so was supposed to have surgery on Friday, but now it is cancelled because there is no bed available.

That is a big problem. It is nothing that reflect the people who are in those beds in hospitals, but 15 per cent of the beds that are taken up in hospitals today are taken by people who could be in homes and while they are getting good care at the hospital, they would get just as good care – and these beds would be freed up.

This plan that is in place is so important. Right now, our health is probably bar none. I mean, everybody always says your health is everything. When you have loved ones who are sick and are waiting in the hospital bed for a room upstairs, it puts a lot of stress on the family

and puts a lot of stress on everybody. There has to be a plan put in place. I have not heard any other plan from anybody else, but the plan that we have is a plan to build 360 new beds that will alleviate the problems that we are having now, and that touches every family in this Province and it is so important.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the health care – and I am not going to speak too much longer about health care because I want to get to all the departments that we touched on. The investment that we make in health care – 40 per cent of the money that our government invests goes to health care, and so it should. I wish that it was taking care of every problem that we have in health care, but I speak to a lot of people in my district and things have improved.

Right now, we have more doctors than ever before in this Province. I could be wrong, but I think it 11,083 doctors right now in this Province. That is huge. We have more nurses than ever before in our Province, which is good and we should. We deserve it. Our people deserve the best health care they can get.

When you are talking about health care, you can never do enough. It is very touchy. We all want the best for our loved ones. We want the best for our children. We want the best for our parents. We want the best for everyone, grandparents and everyone else. So the money invested is good money. There is a lot of money getting invested in health care, so we have to be smart with our money and make sure we are doing the proper things.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** You have to balance.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** You do have to balance.

I really believe these long-term care beds we are doing is a very good investment. I do not know if it is the best thing that can be done. I do not know how it can be done or whatever, but I know that we need beds – people who are in the hospital right now, who are taking up the beds, need to be in the proper place where they should be.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the new long-term care facility here in St. John's, I think it is absolutely wonderful. I have some constituents of mine

who are down there and they just speak so highly of it. We have an aging population, like I said. I was over, only a couple of weeks ago, to St. Patrick's Mercy Home and just watching the care they give to a real good friend of mine who is over there. Her birthday was the weekend, by the way. I am hopefully going to get up tomorrow to see her.

It is important that we take care of our loved ones. This is a good investment. It is an investment that needs to be done. I am hoping that we can –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I am hoping that we can make this investment so that are loved ones are taken care of. Like I said, seniors are so important to all of us. We have people in the House who ask questions and people answer questions. Everyone in this House of Assembly cares about our seniors and wants nothing but the best for our seniors. I believe that this investment that we are making to put the 360 new beds in the Province will be a good investment, be a great investment for seniors, and a great investment for our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about investments we are making and money – I want to talk a little but about Fire and Emergency Services. We have great volunteer firefighters in our Province – unbelievable.

I was in Pouch Cove this weekend – I did a statement last week about their recycle drive. I was down in Pouch Cove on Saturday and they had the recycle drive this weekend, and to see all the volunteer firefighters out. They went to every house in Pouch Cove. There was truckloads upon truckloads of people coming out and making sure they saved all their recyclables and beer bottles and whatnot. It was in the hundreds – I would say about 300 or 400 dozen beer bottles that were there. Now, not that the crowd in Pouch Cove drinks a lot or anything like that; they saved them up over the years.

It was so nice to see the community coming together to support their volunteer fire

departments. I was glad when our Budget came down that we did not cut – the \$5 million that we allocated last year is there still this year for fire equipment and fire services. It is very important that we support our volunteer fire departments, so I was really pleased with that part of the Budget and I thank the Minister of Finance for that.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go into – I am gone way beyond where I wanted to – the Department of Transportation. The minister is not a bad old fellow, I tell you. He is pretty good. He is okay. Do you know something, Mr. Speaker? I can remember driving around this Province and there were a lot of times, I tell you, the roads were pretty rough. We are not going to fix everything all overnight, but I can tell you right now the conditions in my area, the roads are pretty good, I have to say. I really am pleased with the amount of work.

I am very fortunate – and I look at the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Baie Verte – Springdale, the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, and some of the other members, they have areas 300 and 400 kilometres of road. I am very lucky that I do not have that in my district but in my district, I have to say, my roads – I am not perfect. The roads are not perfect; I still need work. We all need work, every district in the Province, but we are in pretty good shape.

When I look the investments that government has made over the last couple of years – in Outer Cove, there is a magazine came out a little while ago and it was a beautiful picture of the road going through the county side. I looked at it first and I had to look at it the second time and said oh, that is Outer Cove Bridge. That was a bridge that this government replaced there about four years ago. It is a good job. Also, another bridge, Savage Creek Bridge was replaced down there too. That was a huge problem for the area because the water used to run over the top of the bridge and it cut the community in half basically. It was dangerous because you would have to go right around it to get to any other part in case of emergency.

That was done and over the years I looked at the amount of work that was done in my area – and I have to say we still need more, but I am not greedy or anything like that, but I am very

pleased with the amount of work that was spent by the Department of Transportation.

The Department of Transportation does a lot more than just roads. You do not realize it but they are involved in a lot – any building that gets built is done through the Department of Transportation. I look in in my own district, there is a new school getting built. Obviously, the school board has a lot to do with it, the Department of Education has a lot to do with it, but the Department of Transportation is the department where they, more or less, are the project managers for that. They take care of all the buildings around and they do a lot of work like that.

This year there was \$600 million allocated for that kind of work, for buildings, schools, roads, health care facilities, and municipal infrastructure in which they are responsible for.

Also if you look at another big part – and no one ever mentions it anymore – are the new water bombers that we have in place now. I think this year there is another \$12.5 million on maintenance repairs and improvements just to that part of it. That is what is getting invested. That is so important. Last year I was down in my district and there was a fire down there. I was pretty impressed with how the water bomber went into one of the ponds and came out. We have top-of-the-line gear. It is important that we protect all of our homes, our properties, and whatnot.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a couple of minutes left. The member on the side of me, I told him I was only going to get up for fifteen. He said no, it is a job to get you to be quiet. He said you will be longer than that.

I want to talk a little bit about Service NL. The minister, I have to say, did a fantastic job on Estimates too. For people who really do not understand Service NL, I say they have you from the time you are born to the time you die and everything else in between. Any permits or anything like that which has to be done are all done through Service NL.

As far as I know, it is probably one of the largest departments in government I would say. Not only is it here in St. John's, it is probably all

over the Province in different areas that there are different – you take it, Mr. Speaker, all inspections are done through Service NL, so anything that needs to be inspected. Obviously we look at the restaurants, food safety, and stuff like that, so it is a very important part. One of the members spoke already today about blue zone parking and all permits and stuff like that. That is also part of Service NL and what they do.

The big part that they do is road safety. It is important. Our roads today, I know just travelling back and forth to Whitbourne or whatever, it is an unbelievable amount of traffic. I know the member said a lot of times in the nighttime he sees tractor trailers travelling. I tell you, there are a lot of times in the daytime it is steady belt on the highway with all these big trucks.

It is very important that we have safety in mind when those trucks are travelling on the road and that they comply to the rules of the road because, listen, there is nothing worse than hearing of a tragedy that happened. If there is a tragedy that can be avoided, it is because of something safe – but our road inspectors and the safety on the roads is all part of Service NL. Motor Registration; Mr. Speaker, everyone needs to get their trailers and cars and everything registered. That is a huge part of it also.

I have to tell you something now, Mr. Speaker. Another one that they do that is pretty interesting is marriage licences. Now why I mentioned marriage licences – I am not going advertising it, but I do a scattered wedding ceremony myself. It is pretty interesting because I started off and I only wanted to do one or two and this summer I have to do five, but that is where you get your permit to do it and where people get their permit to go in and fill out everything like that.

I only have a minute left there now, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk in the last little bit about the monies we invested in moose and the protection on our highways with brush cutting and increase in licenses in areas where moose are a lot on the highway and stuff like that. One trip I take every year with the boys down my way – I love my moose hunting trip. I

absolutely love it. You can tell me to go to Millertown or go to the Dominican Republic and I am gone to Millertown moose hunting; I love it up there.

Our moose – we have to be careful of what we are doing on the highways and stuff like this. Speed is always a problem and everything else, but I think that this year’s strategy that we brought in will help. Everyone who are travelling in the nighttime – I heard on the news this morning about all these moose being sighted. Listen, everybody, please drive a little bit slower in the nighttime. Take your time and hopefully you will not have the accidents because we hate to see anybody and I hate to hear –

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

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad to finally get to stand and speak in the Concurrence debate. The Concurrence that we are doing right now is Government Services and the member responsible for chairing the Government Services Committee did give a brief explanation in the beginning about what is covered under Government Services –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to have you call order so that we can hear ourselves when we are standing and speaking.

The Member for Exploits who chaired the Government Services Committee did explain what is covered under Government Services. It is basically, in terms of departments, Service Newfoundland and Labrador and Transportation

and Works, which are two very important departments which, in many ways, helps government run and take care of the infrastructure of government and the things that are necessary, the nuts and bolts as it were. Then you have the administration of government, the Executive Council of government, the Finance department, Government Purchasing, the Public Service Commission, and the Legislative Branch.

The Legislative Branch, of course, is extremely important because the Legislative Branch covers all the different offices that come under the Executive Council of government, the statutory offices. For example, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Office of the Electoral Office, the Human Resource Secretariat, the Office of Public Engagement, Aboriginal and Labrador Affairs Office, the Women’s Policy Office, all of these come under Government Services and come under the Executive Council, all very important offices and offices which need to be discussed along with the various departments of government.

For people who are watching, I would like just to explain a little bit about Estimates because people hear us using the term Estimates are not sure what we mean. The Estimates is quite a thick book. Anybody watching can see the book; it is here on my desk. Every department’s budget is in this book and every statutory office’s budget is in this book. You also have in this book an analysis of the budget, an analysis of where the money comes from. It is broken down in terms of the actual amounts of money as well as the percentage that each piece is of the whole budget. You have an analysis of where the money goes, in other words how the money is spent. You not only look at that for the current year that one is in, but you have a comparison between the current year and the year previous. You also have a summary in the budget of the debts that budget holds, the loans that budget holds when loans have to be paid, et cetera.

It is a very interesting book because it really does give a lot of information, and it should. Estimates is an open and transparent process. A minister along with the chief staff of the office come into this room actually – this is where we do it – here in the House of Assembly, and they

answer questions that are posed to them. The Committee is made up of everybody. The government side has members on the Committee and all Opposition parties – in our case, it is two Opposition parties. We are all represented on that Committee.

It is interesting because the government members never ask questions. They sort of sit and listen. So for them, it is a very passive process; but for the Opposition members of the Committee, we get to ask questions, we get to probe what happened the year before, we get to ask how come you spent more than you were supposed to spend there than you thought you would be spending. We get the explanations, and sometimes when we probe we get very interesting answers. Sometimes the answer is not straightforward. You see a title and an expenditure and you find out what it is.

I remember one time seeing millions of dollars allocated – I think this was in the Department of Finance, it could have been Natural Resources, this was two years ago – and I decided to ask. There seems to be a large amount of money going out here, what is that going out to? One was a \$10 million loan, I think it was, to Bowaters.

It is interesting to ask the questions and get the answers that come. It is open, it is transparent, and the people can come into the House and watch the Estimates. So, it is an example – we have a couple of examples. That is one example we have here in our Legislature of what committee work could be.

We do have in our Standing Orders, in our booklet we have three Committees called Government Services, the Resource sector, and the Social sector. These are Standing Committees, but the only time these Standing Committees actually get to operate is when we come in here in Estimates. It is an example of how things should be done in government. That is why there is some disappointment that not everything that is in the book actually got discussed in Estimates.

The Statutory Offices, for example – the House Management Commission gets to meet with the Statutory Offices and hear about their budgets. We quiz them and basically approve their

budgets so that when – but that does not happen in public. That is a private discussion that goes on. The final budget is public, of course, but most of the agencies and most of the departments are quizzed here in the House of Assembly openly, and the staff are here with the ministers.

I do want to thank – and I mean this very sincerely – I want to thank the ministers and their staff. I think the staff, in particular, are here for usually around three hours with us. The ministers are here as well. The staff are here giving clear answers, really helping us understand the budgets, and we find that very, very helpful.

So I think it is really important for us to acknowledge the role of the public service sector and the extra work they do. I know leading up to the Budget and then during Estimates we cannot underestimate how many overtime hours they put in in order to make sure, number one, the Budget gets done and, number two, that we get a clear explanation of that Budget.

Now I want to turn to the Budget itself. I want to talk about – just to help people understand, also to tell them that all of these documents we have are available online. People can go into gov.nl.ca and they can find the Budget. They can find all the Budget documents as well. It is not just that the process is open and the documents get talked about in committee, but anybody in the Province, anybody, anywhere, can go in and find these documents and analyze them and study them, and ask questions. I really do encourage people who are concerned to do that.

For example, if you go into this year's Estimates book – that is the book that has all the explanations, all the details. If you go into the Estimates book you will find, when we look at where the money comes from, that this year – the money, for example, from offshore royalties, and we know why, is down 7.4 per cent from last year. Last year, 27.5 per cent of our revenues came from offshore royalties. This year it is only 20.1 per cent. Of course that is because of the drop in the price of oil, but what does this government do?

Back in 2010, we were really making money hand over fist from the offshore. Money was coming in. Things were looking great. What does this government do? In 2010, when the finances were going very well, the government reduced taxes for corporations and higher income individuals. They reduced the taxes for corporations and high-income individuals.

Instead of saying at this point in time we need to plan, not just how to spend money and take less money from other sources, but we need to plan long term for when the money is not going to be coming in at the same rate. How do we keep our system so that we have a steady structure of money coming in? That is not what they did. They lowered corporate taxes and they lowered, in a big way, the taxes on higher income earners.

What are they doing this year? They are increasing, absolutely slightly, the personal income tax by, in actual fact, 0.9 per cent, not even 1 per cent. It came down for the highest income earners in the Province. It came down 4 per cent or 5 per cent in 2010. This year it is going up less than 1 per cent.

They took a whole lot of money out of the public purse from high-income earners, charged them much, much less – not ten years ago – five years ago. This year, when they are in a crunch that they have created because of not doing long-term planning, do they ask for that back? Do they say, okay, you are going back up to where you were in 2010? No. Did they do it to the corporations? No. Over the years they have done very well. Do they have to give back as much now as was taken away before they did not have to pay five years ago? No, you do not do that.

What do they do? They turn to the consumer. Under our sales tax, the consumer is going from 15.5 per cent of the revenue coming in from consumers last year to 18.3 per cent. That is because of the hike in the HST. Now that is not good planning.

The hike in consumer taxation does not hit the really wealthy, but it really hits the middle income and the low income, because that tax is on everything. That tax is on services as well, and we forget that. This phrase sales tax does not really express what HST is. Every service

that one gets, even if you have a haircut, you have to pay tax on it. Before GST, it was not like that – it became HST, it was not like that. So it is more than just a sales tax, it is a sales and service tax.

The gasoline tax has gone up as well. So it turns out that between the hike in the gasoline tax and the hike in the sales tax, the consumer taxation has gone up 3 per cent in this Province. That is a real hit to ordinary people. So when they are paying their heat, when they are paying their light, that is going up. These are needs they have. When they are taking care of their families and taking care of the needs of their families, this taxation is going up and it is just not acceptable. If they buy anything in the supermarket that is any kind of prepared food at all, that has tax on it. We have a Budget that is really attacking the average person, the average family, the middle to low income. Like I said, this raise in consumer taxation does not bother those who are on high incomes. Yes, they pay more tax, but they can do it and it does not hurt.

What we have is a Budget that has targeted, negatively, the middle class and fixed-income earners and lower class people – lower income, rather. People who do not have enough. People who, because of this, low income in particular – we are going to see the people at food banks going up. There is absolutely no doubt about that. We know that is going to happen. Because if they are not able to pay their heat – or they will pay for their heat, they will try to, they will try to have some heat, they have to pay for their lights, they are going to be paying almost 3 per cent more on all of that – where does the money come from? Whether you are a senior on a fixed income, whether you are a low-income wage person on minimum wage – which is not going up to meet the increase in the cost of living. This government refused to do what the committee on minimum wage asked them to do and basically recommended that they do – they did not do it.

We are going to get a very, very slight raise in October, people on minimum wage – it will not even be noticeable to them it is going to be so small – instead of this government having brought the minimum wage up to meeting the cost of living and then making a commitment to

every year making whatever increases are needed.

We have a Budget that attacks people, and this is just not acceptable. This government likes to talk about investments and the thing is this word “investment” is a loaded term, because usually it has to do with money and investment means putting money in so you get money back. When I hear this government talking about investment in roads and investment in building schools and investments in hospitals, these are not investments – they are investments; they are investments in good health of people and people being educated and safe. They are investments in that sense, but let’s be honest with our language. It is expenditures that are needed to take care of people.

Government’s responsibility is to take care of people. Government’s responsibility is to meet the needs of people. Government’s responsibility is to do long-term planning so that we have a fiscal set-up where people’s needs are being taken care of, and this government does not seem to understand that. The way that they spent money since 2003 without long-term planning shows that. I am not saying that we did not need the things that were done; we did. We have been so long with so little, and we certainly had an infrastructure that really needed to be taken care of, but they did not do it with long-term planning, especially with regard to revenue.

It is not good enough in 2010 to say we have all kinds of money, we are going to lower personal income tax for people with higher income and then five years later say, uh-oh, our income from oil and gas is down over 7 per cent and now we are going to have to make people suffer by increasing the consumer taxation in our Province. That is not planning. That is knee-jerk reaction, and that is what this government has been doing is knee-jerk reaction.

They use all kinds of fancy language to make it look like they are thinking things through and that they are planning. The fancy name on their Budget, *Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*, I have talked about that a few times in the House already and I guess I will talk about it again. What promising future are we talking about? What is that promising future? This is what they are not telling people. There is no

promising future in this Budget, a Budget with \$1 billion deficit, and a deficit that is going to go on and on and on. So much so that when we look at how our money is being spent, what is one of the areas that has gone up significantly, Mr. Speaker? Our general government and legislative debt charges and our financial expenses have gone up. Naturally they have gone up because this government has not done due diligence with regard to doing the financial and fiscal planning that needs to be done for people.

I look at the needs in my district; I asked my constituency assistant to put together for me some of the calls that she gets on a regular basis. NLHC, our housing corporation, that is where she gets most the calls about; wait times to get a unit; mould and other issues wrong with the unit, and things not being fixed quickly enough; a whole list of new applicants and long wait-lists while people wait for units.

Then you have the housing in the private sector where you have slum landlords. We do not like to use the term but they exist, and places where people are paying hundreds of dollars a month and they have mould and nobody can regulate that. They have homes that should be condemned because of poor electrical systems, but nobody is regulating it.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Budget is a Budget that is not looking at the needs of people. I am very happy to have been able to speak to it this afternoon. I look forward to speaking to it again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER (Cross):** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. POLLARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is always a privilege to stand in this House of Assembly to represent the people of the District of Baie Verte – Springdale. No matter if you are here two weeks, two months, two years, or twenty years, it is always a privilege and a humbling experience. I will never get tired of standing and representing the people of the

District of Baie Verte – Springdale. As everybody in this House of Assembly, it is certainly a privilege and an honour to be here.

Yes, even seven years ago, I pinched myself to see if it was real. I am still doing the same thing. It is a surreal experience, Mr. Speaker, to be in this House of Assembly.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** You and your buddy from Cape St. Francis.

**MR. POLLARD:** Yes, my colleague just reminded me. Myself and the Member for Cape St. Francis got elected the same time. It was August 27, 2008, I believe, Mr. Speaker. That was a tremendous night indeed.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. POLLARD:** For two Kevins, yes.

Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure, and I am very proud also to be a member of this team. The present Premier here is showing lots of strong leadership and is very bold to make the right decisions at the right time, for the right reasons.

May month, or I suppose early June, this is graduation season and every one of us in this House of Assembly for sure has had the privilege and the honour to attend a lot of graduation ceremonies, high school graduation. Already, I have had the privilege to attend Valmont Academy, King's Point; Indian River High, Springdale; Copper Ridge Academy, Baie Verte; and this past weekend I had the honour and the privilege to attend the St. Peter's Academy, Westport.

One common theme throughout – I have to say this – is the strong leadership and the skill and the potential that is shown by the youth as they get up and speak. The valedictorian address is just awesome. I just want to congratulate them, and of course their parents and the teachers and the whole community. Because without the supports from the community, without the supports from the parents, and without the awesome dedication of the teachers and the whole staff – the educational community, Mr. Speaker, as you know, you are a former

principal – the students would not be able to achieve like they can.

So, hats off and kudos to a tremendous job that teachers and students are doing. The \$1.4 billion of money put in Budget 2015 for education shows that we as a government are certainly committed to education. We know it is very important because we know that an educated society is an economically, innovative and resilient society. It is usually a sustainable society, Mr. Speaker. So I wanted to add that in.

As well, Mr. Speaker, in case I do not get the privilege again. I just learned this past weekend that School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador had their AGM. Guess what? We had a couple of outstanding athletes named from my district. In fact, I taught them. They were former students.

Emily Edison was the female athlete of the year in all Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. That is huge. I would like to congratulate her. The runner-up was also from my district. Her name is Brittany Andrews from Valmont Academy of King's Point.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. POLLARD:** Yes, and not only that, there is more to come. Hold your applause, there is more to come, Mr. Speaker.

The male; there was a runner-up in my district as well. His name is Christian Pelley. He is from Indian River High of Springdale. His parents were in this past weekend to witness that proud moment.

Again, I have to thank and congratulate their dedicated parents and the community support because when youth achieve and make outstanding contributions like that, it is worth congratulations, Mr. Speaker. I am certainly proud of them as well.

Not only that, that is a cross-section right across the Province. We have athletes, not only in my district of course, but right across Newfoundland and Labrador, outstanding athletes. I just want to say kudos to them for winning that today, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, again I have to say this, along with the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services and the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, and other Members of the House of Assembly this morning, we had the privilege to attend a panel discussion at city hall this morning pertaining to youth homelessness. Mr. Speaker, I have to say my heart was moved to hear the youth speak about their issues on that panel.

I have to compliment and congratulate Choices for Youth, and all the other agencies and community supports that are offering support for vulnerable youth, Mr. Speaker. I just hope we can all work together, government departments work together and collaborate, community agencies, all kinds of organizations, all sides of government, work together and try to aim to stamp out youth homelessness in this Province.

I was thrilled to attend that event today on behalf of the Minister of Health and Community Services. I was thrilled to be there. I must say, I was made more aware of the youth issues. Coming from rural Newfoundland, at times you do not really get that perspective because you do not think it is happening. When you come in, in an urban setting and you hear the lived experiences, it really touches one's heart.

Getting back to the issue at hand today, as you know, we are debating concurrence in this House of Assembly. The Government Services Committee is doing just that now. Just to let you know – it was alluded to earlier, but just in case some people did not hear this, comprised of this Committee: Chairperson from Exploits – doing an outstanding job, of course, as usual; we have the Member for Bellevue; the Member for Kilbride; the Member for Cape St. Francis; the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde; the Member for Mount Pearl South; and the Member for St. John's East.

What that Committee did, if you want to know what departments they discussed, Mr. Speaker: the Department of Finance, which represented about \$206.5 million of expenditures, roughly 2.5 per cent of expenditures. Then the Committee discussed the Public Service Commission, \$2.4 million; Government Purchasing Agency, \$2.4 million, around there. Then they discussed the Department of Service

Newfoundland and Labrador, which was \$39.3 million, about 0.4 per cent of expenditures. Then of course the big one, what they discussed in Estimates, was the Department of Transportation and Works, which came to approximately \$590 million, or 7.1 per cent of the entire expenditures of the Estimates.

The Member for Cape St. Francis gave a really good explanation of what we are doing this afternoon in the concurrence stage. I will not do as good a job as he did, but I will endeavour to explain again in case some people mention it.

Concurrence, or during the Budget process, Mr. Speaker, there are usually three committees formed. We have the Government Services Committee, we have the Resource Committee, and we have the Social Services Committee. These committees are comprised of members from the NDP, members from the Liberals, and members from the government side as well.

Each committee is scheduled for about three weeks. They go in and meet the relevant departmental ministers and all of his officials. They will sit down here in this House of Assembly from 9 o'clock in the morning to noon, or a little bit after, or they could sit at 6 p.m. and go to 9 o'clock at night or 9:30, whatever.

These members will have the opportunity to ask all kinds of questions pertaining to the Budget items, line items, or roughly some policy issues as well. These committee members will have the opportunity to drill down and ask questions, why is this so? What happens to this? Why this is not spent, whatever, or any changes here. They get relevant answers from the minister's officials and department officials.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty good process. It is an educational process, because when I came here in the beginning as sort of a neophyte in politics, I said, well, what is this all about? So I took it upon myself – it was difficult – to attend all Estimates meetings. I was not a member of any but I was stubborn. I said, well, if I am not a committee member I will go anyway. That is what I did. I learned a lot, but it was very taxing just the same, Mr. Speaker, and it is certainly an educational experience as well to do that.

Then, of course, when we conclude each committee will come back, like we are doing right now in this House of Assembly, and bring back to this House for a concurrence or for a motion. What that means I suppose is just as the word implies, concur means I agree. The Chair will bring this back as a motion, and like we are doing now, we are debating that motion. We concur and we will pass it, and life goes on, Mr. Speaker, as some alluded to earlier.

Getting back to the Department of Transportation, it was one of the departments the committee talked about and discussed. This is a huge department. I commend any minister, it is very challenging, and former ministers who took on this grave responsibility. It is a challenging responsibility. It is a huge department. We have all kinds of harsh weather in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have all kinds of potholes, you name it, guardrails to put up, painting lines, we have asphalt, and we have roadwork.

The Department of Transportation and Works, I have to say, are under a lot of pressure from the public and their officials. In fact, when I was home this weekend – everybody in this House of Assembly, as MHAs, every day you get home you probably get a call about roadwork. Someone mentioned about the Springdale Junction right up to South Brook Junction, the Trans-Canada Highway there, and it is very bad indeed. We know that, Mr. Speaker, government officials know that. The Department of Transportation and the minister are aware of that, and whenever the resources allow it, I am sure they will get to that roadwork.

It is very challenging indeed. I do not envy the minister and his officials and all the people out there who work on a daily basis right around the Province in highway depots. It is a very challenging job because they have to try to keep up with Mother Nature at times, Mr. Speaker. At any old time at all you could have flooding or whatever, like we had about a month ago in my district.

The officials, I have to say I have to congratulate them. Since my mind is on this now, in my district, the Northeast Coast, probably a month ago now, I suppose, we had the excessive flooding due to heavy rain and runoff. Mr.

Speaker, I have to say kudos to all the highway officials, Fire and Emergency Services department, all the community – all the mayors, departments, responders, Central Health, all the emergency plans. They were all activated. They were all kept in the loop. Everybody was pleased with the response. Of course all the work could not be done right away because it takes time and it takes resources. I have to say, that is a tremendous response and a tremendous challenge on any given day, even when the weather is good.

I will go back again, Mr. Speaker. I always say as MHA for my district, the Baie Verte – Springdale district, roadwork is like oxygen. Back in the days of fifteen, sixteen, eighteen, twenty years ago, like other districts here, roadwork in my district was paramount. There are other areas as well of course like fishing and health care, whatever, but roadwork always percolates to the top. It always percolates up.

You go anywhere in my district, you go anywhere in small communities, they will always come up and say you see this pothole, or you see this guardrail not fixed, or no signage here. Mr. Speaker, rightfully so, they should. I am representing them. They elected me, so I will try to do the best of my ability to pass that information along to the officials and we will try to get the work done.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work that we have done so far. I am not going to complain because I know we have to share. We have forty-eight MHAs here. Right now anyway, it might be forty later on. I would love to have it all. Yes, I would love to have every cent, \$70 million to put in my district right away, but I know we have to share it out. I know that.

We have done quite well. I am pleased. For example, last year we got Fleur de Lys done. That is Route 410 from Baie Verte to Fleur de Lys. That is, what, twenty-three kilometers, I believe. That is huge. Now I guess as I speak now I would presume that the contractor J-1 is down between Brent's Cove junction and La Scie, 9.8 kilometres there which they are doing probably culvert work now and ditching right now to get ready for the asphalt.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on. That is roadwork – up in Green Bay side, we have 392; we are working on that route. The road going to Beachside, Little Bay, St. Patricks, and the road going into Springdale is all done. There has been a lot of work done under the Department of Transportation and Works when it comes to roadwork alone. I say this because it is important to get up in this House of Assembly at times and say look, roadwork is important, drill it home for everybody here that it is essential to every district in this Province, and we know that some districts have more roads and are worse off than other.

I just want again to thank the Minister of Transportation, his officials, the present Premier and former Premiers for all of the support that they have given me as an MHA over the years, and others here as well for all of the support that given me and us to advance our issues in our district, which we certainly appreciate that. On behalf of the people, I will say thank you.

When it comes to education, as a former teacher, I am certainly appreciative of the fact that \$1.4 billion again is gone in Budget 2015. You cannot say enough about teachers, Mr. Speaker. I know there are a lot of teachers here in this House of Assembly – you were one as well – and they go above and beyond the call of duty. I just have to say thank you today on behalf of everybody here because everybody will not get a chance this afternoon to get up and speak.

So, on behalf of everybody here, every MHA, I just want to say a great big thank you to the teachers out there and the support staff for all the work that they do going above and beyond the call of duty. Why do I know this, Mr. Speaker? Because I was there for twenty-eight years; I know exactly what a teacher does. I can tell, you there is no such thing as regular hours of work. There is no such thing as a nine to four or nine to five job. There is no such thing. You are on call basically all the time.

Conscientious, effective teachers, they have to work right on through, they bring the work home – I was there, I witnessed it, I have seen it, I was a teacher myself, and I know what it takes, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say a great big thank you for the teachers who make the education system, and the support they get from this government,

the support they get from the community and from school councils, so thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say how pleased I am to see \$3 billion gone into this Budget 2015 for health care because right around this Province, as you know, we all know, health care is priority number one for the people of this Province. No doubt, health care is number one in this Province of ours.

We hear some negative things at times, Mr. Speaker, but do you know what? There are times I go out around my district – I know you do too – and do you know what they say? They praise doctors and nurses up. They went in and they said look, man, I was treated so nice. I can remember now a teacher friend of mine, he could not say enough about the doctors and the nurses that treated him.

Yes, I am not dismissing the gaps, I am not dismissing the holes, I am not dismissing the challenges in our system or our health care, but overall I hear some good stories out there as well. I know negative always trumps the positive; we are aware of that. That is unfortunate, but that is a fact of life – we know that. As a government, we will do the best we can. I know we have a tremendous Minister of Health, we have tremendous department officials over there who are very professional, very knowledgeable, and we have RHAs out there working day and night trying to meet the needs of health care in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I have worked close with this minister here now, I know his heart, I know the heart of the Department of Community Health and Services – our heart is with the people. We wish we could just push every button and meet every need in this Province, but it is totally impossible to do. On the whole, from my point of view as an MHA, I have to say I am pretty proud of the investment we have made in health care: \$3 billion. We know it is not sustainable, but it is very important to the people. How can you say no sometimes to people who are desperately in need of dental and cancer care and other kinds of care?

We have made great strides, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the strides we have made. Yes, there is more work to do. Are there

challenges? Yes, there are challenges to do, but I think this government is up to the task and this minister and this department is up to the task to meet the challenges in the days ahead. I so appreciate that. The bottom line in all this is that we are people and people care about people. That is the bottom line.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

It is an opportunity for me to speak on the Budget, on the Concurrence part. I think people watching could be forgiven if they wonder why no ministers are getting up to speak to the Budget. They could be forgiven if they are wondering why after a twelve-year-old government that no ministers will get up and say I am the minister of such and such and I have been the minister for however long, and this is what this government has done with all the money I have been given and now I am here looking for some more.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely amazing. These ministers are too ashamed to get up and speak to their own Budget. They are too embarrassed to get up and speak to their own Budget. If you only look at the Budget, if people look at it closely enough, you can see why they are ashamed of the Budget and why they are embarrassed to speak to it. It is over \$8 billion; this is more than \$8 billion. It is the biggest Budget we have ever had in this Province. It is also the biggest deficit we have had in this Province. If that is not enough, we are borrowing \$2 billion to make ends meet – good grief.

I do not understand why it is – I guess I do understand it. The viewers, the people of the Province, and the voters of the Province certainly should ask: Why isn't the minister of this department and this department and this department getting up and saying, well, I made these representations to the Minister of Finance, this is what I asked for. This is what we are getting. This is what we have brought into the

House to be passed. Not, we have had twelve years. We have had twelve really good years. We have done fabulous things. Look where we spent money here, we spent money there, and we spent money someplace else.

Well, Mr. Speaker, people know where they spent the money. Well, maybe they do; maybe they do not. They know the money is gone. They know there has been some massive, massive spending in this Province in, at least, the last five or six years.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one area where there has not been spending, if you just look at the government's own Budget documents, and that is in housing. We attended a forum on youth homelessness put on by Choices for Youth this morning. I noticed the ministers have spoken to how they attended a wonderful discussion this morning on Choices for Youth, but I did not see any of the ministers ask any questions. I did not see any of the ministers say anything, and I did not see them make any commitment. All I saw is the ministers attended.

I saw that the Member for St. John's Centre definitely showed up. She stood up and asked questions. Many members were there. In addition to two ministers and the member who just spoke, a parliamentary secretary, there were four members from the Opposition: the Member for St. John's South, the Member for Conception Bay South, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and I was also in attendance.

The Leader of the Third Party was introduced as an MHA. I am sure he was happy about that. It has not happened yet. I am certain that many of us here will do our best to wish him well and hope that he never becomes a Member of the House of Assembly, but that is just politics.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the lack of investment in housing – if you look at a single line item on page 21.3 of the Budget, it says Housing Operations and Assistance. It says, "Appropriations provide for the Provincial contribution for various housing assistance programs that enable persons to reside in rental units or to rehabilitate their own residences." Mr. Speaker, I think that is fairly clear what that is for. That is for assistance for people to be

able to stay at home, or to fix up their rental units, or to have their rental units fixed up.

The amount that has been budgeted, the estimate this year is \$34,518,000. That may sound like a lot of money, however, if you look over the last three years, in the length of time since this government has been here, Mr. Speaker, that is a 38.5 per cent reduction in the amount allocated for that line – a 38.5 per cent reduction.

I have gone back over the years, and in 2012 this government budgeted and actually spent \$56,123,000 on that item. The following year, they cut the amount back down to \$46,792,000. That was a 16.5 per cent increase at the same time as we were on our way to becoming a have Province. Then they further reduced it from \$46,792,000 to \$42,265,000. That was a 10 per cent reduction. This year they are reducing it from the \$42 million down to \$34.5 million, which is a 22 per cent reduction year over year.

I am told that in Estimates they say, well, we are making up the difference because we are going to allow Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to sell land to make up the shortfall. That does not make sense on a number of fronts. First of all, it does not make sense that when you review their financial statements, they do not actually have that much land to sell. If you look at their inventory of land to sell, there is not enough land to sell to make up that. In addition to that, we are in a declining real estate market. So why would you sell off your land when it is down? Why wouldn't you keep it? Furthermore, if you acquired this land for public housing, then why are you going to sell it off now instead of developing it for public housing that you acquired it for in the first place, presumably at a decent price? So that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

You may have wondered, Mr. Speaker, at how – Newfoundland and Labrador Housing cannot be doing very well if the government keeps on reducing the amount of money it is supplying for this particular use. This use, if I go back to it, says, "Appropriations provide for the Provincial contribution for various housing assistance programs that enable persons to reside in rental units or to rehabilitate their own residences."

Now I am certain that other members – and I will not speak for urban members, but certainly rural members – on a fairly regular basis people contact our offices looking for assistance for their homes. It is always people whose income is very low, so they look to the threshold. The amount of money they are looking for tends to be a very small amount. It could be \$5,000, \$6,000, \$7,000, maybe \$3,500. Somebody is looking for money to fix up their windows so that their home is not drafty anymore, so they save some money on heat bills, or they are looking to fix a leaky roof.

I remember a case just a year-and-a-half ago where I visited a family. They had a complaint about their stove, and you never know for sure what it is like until you go there. When I was in that community, I called on the people and I had a look. I said, yes, your stove really is not in that good of a condition. The only kind of a stove that you really should be able to see the flame is a fireplace. You should not be able to see in through the side of the stove in a residence, in a home. It is not a good thing. I said, by the way, when you get another stove perhaps you should level it up, because it is not really good to have your stove kind of off-kilter, and yes, those stovepipes do not look that good to me.

One of the issues was her partner, her common-law spouse had had a loan years earlier and there was a default. This was many years earlier, and there was a default as a result of a divorce. This was being held against him. So we were able to advocate for this couple that they could get some money for a wood-burning stove in the middle of a kitchen of a very modest two bedroom home without any basement and without any attic. It is a small home in a rural community. Even then it was necessary to advocate for them, which fortunately we did through my office, and we received the money.

The reasoning, in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, of the way some of this money is given, they said, well, we will only give you money for the materials because we are pretty sure you will get somebody to do the work for you. They are expecting people to have family members or friends or come up with the cash to do the work themselves. If you look at how this is such a minimal amount of money and it is

sprinkled all over the Province for housing for people to stay in their own homes.

If these people just threw in the towel and said, well, this is just not worth it anymore. We are not going to go through the aggravation of having to fix up this old house we have been in for twenty-five or thirty or forty years. Let's just apply for some public housing and forget all about this. Then that only increases the strain on public housing. It makes so much more sense to be able to give these people the very nominal amounts of money they want for stoves, windows, doors, shingles, and all the sorts of things that allow people to live in their homes for a longer period of time than they would be able to.

Mr. Speaker, you would think that if government keeps on cutting the funding – and they have clearly cut the funding in these last three or four years – to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, then Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is probably running on empty, probably running on dry. They are probably going to go broke.

Well, I went over the annual reports of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing almost in the same way as I would go over report, say, if I wanted to buy stock in a company, anybody who wants to buy stock in a company would say: How have they been doing? Have they been making any money? They must be losing money year after year after year.

In public corporations like Newfoundland and Labrador Housing you do not actually have retained earnings, but I know that there are people in this House who are familiar with retained earnings and that is the money that you have left from your profits at the end of the year, which ideally it keeps increasing and increasing and increasing. Every year you make \$100 or \$1,000 or \$100,000 and whatever you do not take out of the company stays in and that adds to your retained earnings; and it is a good measure of the health of a company if the retained earnings keep going up year after year after year because you know they are profitable.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing would be a pretty good buy. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is increasing – well, in public companies like this,

we call it their accumulated surplus. The accumulated surplus, the extra money that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has, has accumulated year after year after year for the last number of years. If you started a baseline in 2010 – and in 2010, they changed some of the accounting for public entities, but these have been properly adjusted so they are all consistent. In 2010 the accumulated surplus of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing was \$41,714,000. That is the surplus that resided, that was sitting on the books in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

From 2010 to 2011, that increased to \$46,109,000, so that was a 10.5 per cent increase year over year from 2010 to 2011 in what Newfoundland and Labrador Housing had. That basically is their profit, if they were a for-profit company. Now, the following year, maybe because that was a pretty good year, they went back six-tenths of a percent, so maybe they gave out a few more of those little loans; but meanwhile, the government is clawing back some of the money because they are not giving them so much year after year after year.

They got it back on track the following year. They went from \$46 million back down to \$45 million and then the following year from 2012 to 2013 the accumulated surplus in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing increased from \$45,830,000 to \$51,477,000. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing increased its accumulated surplus by 12.3 per cent from one year to the next. That is money they had left over. That is money that is an extra amount of increased accumulated surplus. They were up \$6 million that year while people are struggling for these home improvement loans.

One of the ways that they manage being able to choke off people applying for these loans, which I only learned last year, is that – we thought they were saying to people, well, the Budget is not out yet. This was last year's Budget. In fact, my response was: Well, tell people to put their applications in because they are going to need to apply. They are going to need to assess their homes. They are going to need to get prices from building suppliers. You are going to want to get three quotes to do it appropriately so put it all in.

No, no, no we cannot do that because we do not have any applications. You cannot get an application to apply for it until Newfoundland and Labrador Housing makes an application available. If you cannot apply, you cannot get in the queue. So you cannot get on the waiting list to get money in these nominal amounts of money, \$3,500, \$5,000, \$6,000, \$7,000, \$8,000, \$10,000 to fix up your home. Anybody familiar with home repairs and home improvements realize for those kinds of dollars, you are not going to do a lot of work.

In addition to helping people, all the small businesses in towns and cities located all over the Province – this is a little bit of economic stimulus for these small businesses, even a nominal amount. So if they have a half a dozen of these or a dozen of these in a place like Rocky Harbour, or Port Saunders, or in my district where there are building suppliers, then this helps increase their revenues.

These are not even grants in many cases. In many cases they are loans, so people are going to pay them back at \$40, \$50, \$60 a month for five, or six, or seven years. The taxpayers are out no money whatsoever. In this case on nominal amounts like this, being able to have people live in comfort, and live in a home where it is warm, where it is dry, and where it is fuel efficient, it is a worthwhile investment. It is a human resource, a human type of investment.

Mr. Speaker, from 2013 the accumulated surplus of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing went from \$51,400,000 to \$54,600,000. So that is another \$3 million increase in accumulated surplus from 2013 to 2014. That is a 6 per cent increase in that year.

Mr. Speaker, I did the compound interest thing and I averaged it over the last four years. What has been the increase in the accumulated surplus year over year like compound interest growth for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing for the last four years? It is 7.05 per cent. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has increased by 7 per cent per year in a time when the stock market has done pretty lousy.

The stock market has not done very well. We know that a lot of indicators are down; a lot of people are not making money. In fact, if you

could consistently make 7 per cent on your money in a time when inflation is less than 2 per cent, then you are netting higher than the historical return from the Toronto Stock Exchange for the last fifty or sixty years.

Mr. Speaker, when the ministers fail to get up and defend the Budget – they should not need to defend the Budget. They should actually be bragging about the Budget, if they had something to brag about; but, regrettably, they do not have something to brag about. This Budget, which is the largest Budget in our Province's history, with the largest deficit in our Province's history, at a time when all the government's indicators are going down for economic growth, and they have been going down for the last, at least, two years – government has been well aware of this. All the forecasting has been down for housing starts. This is not a Budget to be proud of. This is a Budget to fear.

If you look at just one entity with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, it is performing so well economically, yet it is performing so poorly for the people who depend on it.

Mr. Speaker, to summarize, I would like to tell a story of a Finance Minister who was entrusted by the Premier to not spend any money. The Minister Finance has a proposal. Each minister will come before the Finance Minister. They will have their spreadsheets and they will say: I need this much money. I need that much money. Here is what I am going to do with it. All these ministers, quite diligently, will be advocating for their own departments. It could be Education. It could be Health. It could be Justice. It could be Fisheries. It could be any department. Each minister will come before the Finance Minister.

The Premier said: You kind of got to watch it. You cannot be giving all these ministers all the money they are asking for because we will go broke. The Finance Minister said: Don't you worry about that. I have a way to ensure that these ministers do not get what they are asking for. They only get whatever we want to give them. So I will make a deal with them at the beginning.

When the new minister comes in or the minister with his hat in his hand – his cap in his hand in Newfoundland and Labrador – and he says: I need this much money for my department. The Minister of Finance will say to him: Well, that is fine. If you look at me you cannot tell, or most people cannot tell which one, but one of my eyes is a glass eye. The Minister of Finance said to the new minister: One of my eyes is a glass eye and if you can pick the glass eye, you get your money. The others will have to fight, but you will get your money.

So let's take, for example, the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services. Being a new minister he is a little bit panicked. All of this money is riding on him picking which one of the minister's eyes is a glass eye. He says to him: Minister, if you can tell me which one of my eyes is a glass eye, you will get whatever you have asked for. All the others have to fight over theirs at the Cabinet table.

So he reached and he said: Sir, I am pretty – and he was kind of in a panic because the Minister of Finance was a stern guy and he was a fairly new minister. He said, it is the one on the left. He said you picked the one on the left? He said, yes, Sir. He said, are you sure you pick the one on the left? Well, yes, Sir, I picked the one on your left for your glass eye. He said, well, I have to tell you, you are the first minister to come in here to pick the eye. It was the right eye for the glass eye. He said, how did you know which one of my eyes was the glass eye? He said, Minister, of the two eyes, I looked at them and I kind of figured it out. He said I picked the warm one.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Bellevue.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

Our Chair earlier, the Member for Exploits, had explained the Estimates committees. Each year when the Budget is announced, there is a

committee put together to do Estimates in the House of Assembly after hours mostly, from 6:00 until 9:00 and sometimes from 5:00 to 9:00.

It was a pleasure for me to be on the Government Services Committee, Mr. Speaker. We talked about a range of things that have been happening within the committees. We dealt with the workplace health and safety. We dealt with the Department of Transportation and Works. We dealt with Finance. We also dealt with Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of issues that were brought forward by the members in Opposition with regard to the Estimates, and a lot of questions being asked to the different ministers who were in their departments and their staff. I might say the staff and the ministers did a fantastic job in explaining the questions that were asked.

Mr. Speaker, at Service Newfoundland and Labrador we talked about things with regard to Motor Registration. Motor Registration deals with driver's licences and different things like that, Vital Statistics, Registry of Deeds, Government Services, and Occupational Health and Safety too. Highway enforcement comes under Service Newfoundland and Labrador. Septic permits for septic tanks; a lot of people in my district this year – I had to deal with a lot of issues with regard to septic permits, especially when it comes to Crown lands.

You talk to a lot of people who have made applications for the Crown lands. One of the things they say that you have to have is your permits in order. So you have to go to a company and get your permits for the septic so that you have proper septic. The amount of land, I guess, to be able to put a septic system in is the big thing. Especially in local service districts where you have to have a piece of land, I think it is 200 by 200, in order to be able to put a septic system in to get the expert system.

It is not like it was one time where you would stick a septic tank down between two houses and that was good enough and that was it. A lot of older houses today, when they are replacing their septic tanks, have to be exempted somewhat from the policies that are in place

today with regard to septic tanks. We have had some people in older houses, living in a really tight area in communities where they have had their septic tanks being replaced, who had to dig up their septic tank, or put a septic tank in side by side by the one that was there, and then had to bury the old one that was broken or falling in order to make the arrangements to be able to get their septic to their house.

It is really a big issue in a lot of the small communities. As a matter of fact, one of the biggest issues we have facing our communities today is the septic system and trying to keep the septic in the land so that it would be dispersed properly so that we would not get the raw sewer going into the ditches and things like that, into the community. Environmental issues are always in effect there as well.

The inspections on buildings, Mr. Speaker, things like that today. It is not so much in rural Newfoundland, but in the larger cities now like Clarenville, Gander, Corner Brook, and St. John's, I know, is a big one. My daughter lived in Torbay for some time. She was building a new home there. She had to get inspections done on her house. Those inspections had to be done. It is compulsory now by the city itself to have inspections done on houses. We see that happening every day.

Mr. Speaker, also with regard to Transportation and Works, we see that they are a bigger field than just doing roads. They also look after buildings such as schools and government buildings. The Confederation Building here, the security here all falls under the Department of Transportation. It is a fairly big field of work that has to be done. As one of my colleagues said earlier, the transportation workers out in our districts work very, very hard, with the resources that they have, to try to maintain the facilities and try to maintain the roads and everything in the districts.

Most all of us in this House of Assembly are experiencing problems at times with roads. We all have problems with roads. I do not think we will ever in the near future be able to get the money to be able to do the work on roads that needs to be done, or how the roads need to be done. That is why you see, a lot of times, a lot of levelling being done in the districts and

throughout the Province to try to get the road maintenance done.

I made up a list back when I was elected in 2007. I asked for a list of roadwork to be done in my district and the figures were large, Mr. Speaker. Large compared to some of the ones like Placentia – St. Mary's that was next to mine. We live pretty close together there when it comes to our districts with the Trans-Canada just separating the two districts. A lot of times we have compared our roadwork that had to be done.

We have been very successful in getting a lot of roadwork done. I think in my district since 2007 we had close to probably \$29 million being done on roads, bridges, culverts, and different things like that. It is quite an amount of money, but not all of it came from the provincial government. A lot of it came from the federal government too in cost shared, but it is still monies into the district. I am very pleased to see that being done.

Just a couple of years ago I remember when I went into English Harbour East. They did a protest on the bridge that they had there. It was only a very small community that had a few houses on one side of the river and they were on the other side. The bridge was getting in that bad of shape that the transportation truck could not go over it with the plow. So they had to put a restriction on how much weight was able to be used on the bridge.

At that time the minister committed to put a new bridge in and that cost around \$1.4 million. Now today they have a new bridge in English Harbour East that they now can drive over. It is wider than the one that was there before. It is safer for the children. The people had to walk at the same time that the traffic went through there. Now it is a lot safer than what it was back then. So these kinds of things are really a necessity. In order to keep our small communities alive in the way that they are supposed to be, they need to keep their infrastructure up. This government has been doing that, Mr. Speaker.

I will also speak about culverts. I think somebody mentioned earlier on the Opposition side about the different storms that we had, Igor, and that a lot of the work from Igor is not done.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, when Igor was on the go all the culverts that had to be replaced on the Burin Peninsula Highway. In the district that I represent, a lot of the roadwork – there are no homes, there are no houses, there are no buildings. It is just an hour-and-a-half travel on a space of road that takes me to the Burin Peninsula to the communities I represent.

My district has to look after that under the budgeting I get from the Department of Transportation. That has to be done under the roadwork that is on the Burin Peninsula. I had several culverts that had to be replaced. They were not covered under Igor, even though a lot of them were washouts, a lot of washouts to the roads, but they were not covered under Igor. Some of them were and some of them were not. So they had to come out of the budget I had for that year.

Now, most people out there think that the MHAs have a pocket of money that they get every year for roadwork. A lot of them think that the money is in your back pocket, Mr. Speaker. We have to go looking for the money every year. Most people when you talk to them they say, look, you got \$3 million, or you got \$2 million, or you got \$1 million. Whatever that budget is, they think that is your money to spend and you can direct that money to wherever you want, but that is not the way it is, Mr. Speaker.

When that money is announced by the Department of Transportation we put in our plans for what we want to get done – recommendations. Sometimes we may have a lot of recommendations in. We know we are not going to get all the work done. The money is just not there.

What happens is that the engineers put in their priorities as well. I guess, evaluating all the safety issues that are there, most cases you will see your roadwork getting done. You will see some money for leveling or for pavement or for dirt roads.

What happens then, Mr. Speaker, is there may be some bridges that are weakened or there may be some culverts that have to be replaced. These are all done under the safety part of transportation. So you take a really close look at that and you evaluate then which ones should be

done as a priority. Of course, the roadwork gets put on the back burner then and the culverts and bridges have to be done because it is part of our main transportation throughout the Province. We have to make sure that we have good culverts and good roadwork done to be able to accommodate the emergencies in communities throughout the district.

With the schools, I remember when I first got elected in 2007 we had a lot of problems with schools. A lot of schools needed roofs repaired. They needed windows repaired. A lot of them had mould in them. Air conditioning – I remember in Terrenceville we had a lot of situations in Terrenceville where we had to go do some monitoring on the air samples that had to be done because the kids used to be sick in the morning, some of the kids used to be sick in the morning, so they had to do a lot of air sampling. That was in 2007, but go into that school today, Mr. Speaker, and you see the new windows that have been replaced in that school and see the work that has been done. It certainly has come a long way in the few years that I have been there as MHA.

The same thing happened in the Swift Current school; a lot of the roof repaired in that school. I think it was two years they were repairing. They repaired one part one year and then the other part another year. They also did some work on the classrooms and things like that. The same thing happened in the Chapel Arm school. Every one of the schools in my district had work being done on them.

These are the kind of things that Transportation is involved in. I am sure this year is not going to be any different than any other year. In Transportation this year – certainly when the Budget comes out in the very near future – we will get road work done again this year.

My district has some dirt roads that I have had great problems with throughout the whole time but maintained fairly good with regards to grading and that. It was only just last week, I noticed last week that there was grading being done throughout the district with the dirt roads that is being done.

One of the biggest challenges we have is the road in Bellevue – the community itself – it is a

challenge there with a road there. We also have a road in what they call Old Mill Road, which is always a challenge, trying to keep that up as well. The biggest challenge we have, I guess, is the Monkstown Road, which is, I think, something like twenty-three or twenty-four kilometres long. There is always a challenge there especially in the wintertime. In the wintertime, Mr. Speaker, that road really gets weak in the wintertime with the snow runoff because the shoulder needs to be brought up a bit in areas.

We have done quite a bit of work on that road. We have done probably close to \$800,000 worth of work on that road and brought the road up in some places. There are about six or seven kilometres that has been done where there has been some troubled spots. The people are very, very happy with that, every dollar counts, and if we can find a way to put a few dollars in on the dirt roads we do that.

A load of fill on a dirt road – I always said that if you can put two or three loads of fill on a dirt road it is as good as if you give them \$400,000 or \$500,000 of payment because they know they are not going to get the pavement. But it certainly helps them and makes their drive easier and smoother to drive on when you can drive on some road gravel rather than be driving on the rocks.

When you are grading the road, too, if you do not have some gravel on the road that you can grade, well, it goes down to the rocks. That is the way it is; you just cannot grade it. You tear up your machines along with everything else.

I also wanted to speak a little bit about Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing programs in my district. Over the past few years I have been very, very helpful to a lot of seniors in my district and going through the district. Under Newfoundland and Labrador Housing we have the Home Repair Program and also the Home Modification Program which has been a great help to a lot of seniors and different people in the district.

We have seen a lot of work being done as well with regard to the energy efficiency program. That energy efficiency program has really done

a lot of work for a lot of people in the district. The people are very pleased. Those small projects might not mean much to some people, but to the seniors out there and the low-income families they mean a lot. The programs and the money that is being spent by government are well spent. The people really deserve it because what we are doing is we are keeping the seniors in their homes a lot longer than would happen.

It certainly helps out the community when it comes to low-income families as well. We have a lot of people who cannot afford to get the siding repaired on their house or to get a door put in or a window. I have seen some bad areas where people have called us with regard to an emergency, but unfortunately windows, doors, and siding is not covered under emergency even though people think it is.

If you have a window in your house where you can almost push it out, or you have the window blowing and you can see the window moving around, some of the older people get really scared because of what happened with a bay window in their home. They phone and say we have an emergency, but when it comes down an emergency with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing that type of an issue is not an emergency. Electrical is an emergency. A leaky roof where water is coming down into the electrical in your house is an emergency. If your house has bad shores under and the floor is starting to drop, that is an emergency. So there are different interpretations of emergency than what the people themselves interpret as an emergency.

Also under the prescription drug plan, that is a great help to people. This year our raise in the dental plan was really great. A lot of people were having grave concerns about the dental plan because we had a dental plan in place that was covering up to \$700 this year. The dental association themselves raised the dentures up to – I think last year to get one denture it was \$800. This year the dentures have gone up to \$1,125. To get one denture, it is \$1,125, so the increase that we gave certainly is a great help to a lot of people, a lot of low-income families. That was a great move, I think, for the Department of Health. I certainly applaud the minister for doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will take my seat. I will get a chance to speak again on some other issues as the day goes on.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) talk about Bob.

**MR. HILLIER:** No, Bob is gone home to supper.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will take this opportunity to speak again on this whole Budget process. I have spoken three times to the Budget piece itself. I talked a little bit about the Budget per se. I have talked about the department that I monitor: Seniors, Wellness and Social Development. The last day I was speaking on my district, some of the things that are happening in my district, and I ran out of time. It is great to be able to take the opportunity now to sort of pick up where I left off the last day and talk about some of the things that are happening in the beautiful Town of Conception Bay South.

Conception Bay South is becoming quite a bustling community, a bustling town, with 26,000 people. Where I left off the last day, I just started talking about some of the capital works that were taking place in the town. I ended off where I was talking a little bit about a new library, Mr. Speaker.

The library in Conception Bay South was built at the same time as the town became incorporated, and the town hall was built some forty years ago. We are now in a position where the town wishes to build a new town hall. That new town hall is well under construction. One of the pieces of financing for this new town hall comes from the selling of the property that the old town hall is on. As a result, with the library right next door to the town hall, we are now in a position that that building will probably go as well.

It is not just as a result of selling that property, but for some time now the local library board has been looking for a new library in the Town of Conception Bay South. That library board has petitioned council. It has petitioned government on many occasions and we are still there now with no library, and the local population having the uncertainty of where the library will be once this property is sold in Manuels.

Mr. Speaker, it got to the point about a year ago that the people who use the library and the local library board called a town hall meeting, called a public meeting, and about 150 people came out to that meeting. A group of people, a lot of people had their say, and eventually called the local member to the microphone. They wanted to ask him questions about why they had to wait so long to get some kind of a commitment on the library.

There were 5,000 active users of that library, and the Chair of the library board that evening made a point of asking the local MHA well, if all of these people signed a petition, you would have a 5,000-member petition to take to the House of Assembly. Would that make a difference? Even with 5,000 people standing up for a new library, the MHA said: No, it would not make any difference at all, however many signed this particular petition. The word arrogance went right through the group that someone can stand there and say that a 5,000-person petition would make no difference.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, we all moved on that evening, sort of disappointed, but as the winter went on and we went through DarkNL and we had no crisis during DarkNL and the pollsters did their pieces – as the winter went on and we moved into spring, polling showed that government was moving down in the polls; and, come Budget time, lo and behold, there is a new library for Conception Bay South in the Budget document.

Mr. Speaker, it was not to build a library. All Conception Bay South wanted was the same deal that Corner Brook had, and that was they were more than prepared to build a library and allow government to lease it back from them – and that is all that was asked of them.

Mr. Speaker, that was Budget 2014. The town has done its work; the town has had plans done. The town is ready to start construction, but at this point in time there is still no signature on a Memorandum of Understanding that if the town builds this building and if the town builds a library, that in fact government will lease it back from the town so that we can have a new library, Mr. Speaker.

As of today, I am asking government to facilitate the signing of that Memorandum of Understanding. Because the town is not prepared to start work on a new building if they do not have a Memorandum of Understanding that they are going to be the major tenants in that building and are prepared to pay the rent for that building. I am asking government today to facilitate the signing of that memorandum so that the Town of Conception Bay South can get on with the building of this particular building so that the people of Conception Bay South will have the library that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I have asked questions here on several occasions about the new school in Kelligrews. I keep being, I guess, assured that this is going to happen. We have two primary elementary schools, one in Kelligrews and one in Upper Gullies, that are bursting at the seams.

The Town of Conception Bay South has grown from east to west. Over the last twenty years we have had a burgeoning population in the east end of town. That population is now moving into the west end of town. So we are into Kelligrews and Upper Gullies where – we have subdivisions.

Mr. Speaker, I saw earlier this week, one of our larger municipalities talking about how they had a new subdivision in town. To give you an idea of how things are booming in our town, and the Member for Cape St. Francis with Torbay and Outer Cove, I am sure understands exactly how the same thing is happening down there in terms of development. Not only do we have a development, we had eighty-four at one point in time two years ago in various levels of development.

As a result of all that development – as I said, most of it is in the west end of town – we have subdivisions that would populate a school.

Right now, all of those children are going to Upper Gullies Elementary or going into St. Edward's Elementary in Kelligrews.

Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2012-2013, money was identified for a new school in Kelligrews. In fact, \$27,000 of it was spent for planning. The school was to be a Grade K-7 school, a population of approximately 600 students, two storeys, thirty-two class spaces, and gym and so on.

In Budget 2013, \$3 million was set aside for that school. In Budget 2014, \$11 million was set aside for that school. In Budget 2015, \$8 million was set aside for that school. That is a lot of money for a school of that size, but it seems those are the figures that have shown up in the subsequent Budgets since 2012.

The problem we have, Mr. Speaker, is that when the school was announced last Budget year, that would have been 2014, the land was levelled. The local MHA made sure there was a big new sign up there that is now starting to get a little bit ratty. It went up, officials had pictures taken with the sign, and that is all we have.

Mr. Speaker, we still have crowded classrooms at St. Edward's. We still have crowded classrooms at Upper Gullies Elementary. We know a tender was called earlier this year for that particular school. We know that tender has not yet closed. We know we have been told that school is going to be open in 2016. That is now fourteen months, fifteen months to opening.

I have watched capital projects proceed in various parts of this Province over the last number of years as a result of my involvement with municipal council in the Town of Conception Bay South. I am hoping, and the Minister of Transportation and Works keeps telling us, that school is going to be open by 2016. Otherwise, the children in that part of our town will be going back to those overcrowded classrooms once again.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I want to talk a little bit about things that are happening in my town and the relationship with government. The next piece I would like to talk a little bit about is our highway network and the fact that we have three provincial highways running through

Conception Bay South: one is the Foxtrap Access Road; one is the new Conception Bay South Bypass Road; and the third is the old, what we call, Route 60. Route 60 is, I guess, an extension of Topsail Road. So if you go down on Harvey Road to Cornwall Avenue to Topsail Road, it will take you right out to Route 60. Topsail Road goes as far as the Manuels Bridge. After that it becomes the Conception Bay Highway.

Mr. Speaker, on that highway we have eight schools where we have children walking 1.6 kilometres from their homes because they do not qualify for busing. The section from Manuels Bridge to the Foxtrap Access Road on Route 60 is four lanes. We have an elementary school on those four lanes. We have the Conception Bay South Bypass Road where we know, in recent months, we have had several serious accidents.

Mr. Speaker, we have these highways going through our town taking tens of thousands of vehicles per day. I have heard members here today talk about the potholes in the roads and how much provincial highways they have, and tens of kilometres of provincial highways in their districts. I fully understand it is a different issue they see altogether, that is the deterioration of these rural highways.

In our case, we have an urban highway running through a town with a population of 25,000 people. It is only a twenty-kilometre highway, but it is a provincial highway. It is left to the town to ensure the safety of the children who are walking there, to ensure the safety of the children who are crossing those four lanes of highway, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the concerns we have there, the shoulders of the roads are falling away, falling into the ditches. As a result of the shoulders falling into the ditches, the children do not have as big a walking surface. So the town has had to invest into paying for its own sidewalks.

Mr. Speaker, I am not expecting government to pay for sidewalks on major highways throughout this Province, but we would like to see government give permission to the towns to use 70-30 money to – I know this is something that has been discussed in the past. Towns want to be able to use their 70-30 money to build

sidewalks in the town. They want to be able to spend their 70-30 money to put stoplights up and walk lights. Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have eight schools. Six of them are on Route 60. The traffic is intense. The town this year said we are going to put walk lights, stoplights, at each of those schools. Unfortunately, they have had to take it out of tax revenue.

We are a big town now. We are not a little town that has to be taken by the hand and led around by a government agency. We have professional engineers on staff. We have professional planners on staff. We have town workers who have been working in these areas for a long, long time. We do not need to be led around by the hand. We do not need to be told that we can only spend our 70-30 money on paving roads and putting in water and sewer.

The Town of Conception Bay South is a big boy now. They can make the decisions themselves. What they have asked is that you provide the 70-30 money – yes, we know where our needs are. All they are asking is that sidewalks and stoplights – instead of taking it out of tax revenue; let us use some of our 70-30 money. Obviously, we are grateful for any 70-30 money that the town receives.

Mr. Speaker, I have brought forward several issues. One that, I am not sure how many people – I am sure the minister is aware of it. That is a Limits of Service Agreement that exists between the Province and the towns. I will explain to you what a Limits of Service Agreement is in terms of Conception Bay South.

Conception Bay South is built along Route 60 with a whole bunch of long roads going off Route 60 to the south. If you go off Route 60 to the north, the streets are shorter because they come to the bay. As you go to the south side, you have streets like Monument Road, Fowlers Road, Anchorage Road, Dunn's Hill Road, Greeleytown Road, these are kilometres long.

Back in the 1980s the Province sat down and said look, we want to discourage building at the ends of these roads. We want to encourage infill housing, infill building, on the near sides of these roads, in the areas of these roads closest to Route 60, so that the servicing is not as expensive.

So they sat down with the town, as they did with other towns throughout the Province, drew a line that said we will not allow you to spend any 70-30 money beyond this line as you go into the lengths of these roads. Mr. Speaker, that was twenty-five years ago. Again, the Town of Conception Bay South has grown up, as the Town of Torbay has grown up, as some other of our towns have grown up – and you end up with some anomalies. For instance, we did some paving on one of the streets in one of my wards several years ago; we were only allowed to pave half the cul-de-sac. We were only allowed to pave half the cul-de-sac using 70-30 money, because that is where the Limits of Service Agreement reached at that time.

Now we have half a cul-de-sac paved – and there is no doubt the town was financially viable enough to come up with its own dollars to pave the other half of that cul-de-sac, but the point is it is a big town now, and I will ask the minister to have a look at working with the town to renegotiate that agreement that was built twenty-five years ago so that those anomalies no longer exist, and the agreement is such that a modern, growing town with professional staff can move forward as it should and grow into the town that we all hope that all of our towns would grow into – one that is robust, one that is growing economically, one that has all of its protocols, all of its planning in place so that we can work with government and make some of these processes a little bit easier.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

The motion is that the Report of the Government Services Committee be concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Report of Government Services Estimates Committee, carried.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. Deputy House Leader.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 1:30 p.m.

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