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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I am pleased to welcome to the public gallery this afternoon several members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association, along with the Executive Director, Diane Molloy.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear members' statements from members representing the Districts of Conception Bay South, Port au Port, Bay of Islands, Carbonear – Harbour Grace, Mount Pearl South, and Bonavista South.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Every day in Newfoundland and Labrador, two young workers aged fifteen to twenty-four are injured on the job; the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission's goal is to empower workers, especially youth, to take action and to help foster a culture of safety throughout our Province. The Commission firmly believes that fostering a strong safety culture among young workers builds a foundation that will lead to less workplace injuries.

Today I would like to congratulate Holy Spirit High School from the District of Conception Bay South and the school's Occupational Health and Safety team on recently winning the seventh season of Who Wants to Save a Life?, a gameshow sponsored by WHSCC. The team became Provincial Health and Safety Champions by defeating a strong team from Indian River High School in Springdale.

Members of the winning team are Oliver Barnes, Tanisha Fleming, Chelsea Hounsell, Megan Coles, Mark Hemmings, and teacher sponsor Mr. Tony Pretty. Each member of the winning

team received \$1,000 scholarship and the school received a prize of \$5,000.

I ask all members to join with me in congratulating Holy Spirit High School and WHSCC in helping prevent workplace injuries among our youth.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: I rise today to recognize and congratulate all of the Level III students in the District of Port au Port. During the past number of weeks the graduating students of Stephenville High, Piccadilly Central High, and École Sainte-Anne have had the opportunity to celebrate the many years of memories and experiences that moulded their lives. This is an important milestone – one that will lead them to new and exciting experiences as they prepare to either enter the workforce or continue on to post-secondary studies.

Mr. Speaker, these schools have prepared the students well for a world of opportunities. They have worked arduously to reach this goal, and realize that no matter what career path they choose, their training and education will play a very important role.

I would like to commend the school principals, staff, parents, guardians and graduates who deserve the highest accolades on the success of your accomplishment.

Je demande à tous les honorables membres de se joindre à moi pour féliciter tous les diplômés récents et leur souhaiter nos meilleurs vœux alors qu'ils préparent leur avenir.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating our latest graduates and wish them well as they prepare for their future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Level III graduating class of St. James All Grade School in Lark Harbour.

On May 22, I had the pleasure of attending the graduation ceremonies which began with a church service followed by a dinner, presentation of scrolls and a dance later in the evening.

The evening was filled with tears, laughter and joy as they spoke of the bonds of friendships formed from a young age and the memories and experiences they shared together which they will now take with them as they begin the next chapter in their lives.

The students were very appreciative of the guidance and support of their families, teachers and each other for helping shape their lives and making them the individuals they are today.

The twelve graduates include: Leah Callfas, Cheyanne Lushman, Monica Rotchford, Christian Payne, Dylan Larkin, Nicholas Skinner, Kennedy Sheppard, Courtney Pennell, Zachary Sheppard, Jonah Sheppard, Tyson Hoskins, and Nathan Sheppard. This is a gifted group of young adults and I am confident our Province is in safe hands.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the 2015 graduating class of St. James All Grade and wish them every success in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Alice Blundon for her outstanding commitment for over twenty years as the founder and volunteer leader of the St.

Paul's Fun and Fitness program in Harbour Grace.

Alice has an outstanding history of volunteerism serving over twenty-five years with the CBN Figure Skating Club and heavily involved in the Carbonear Recreation Commission. She was a director of the 1992 Summer Games and a volunteer with the 2012 Summer Games.

As the leader of the Fun and Fitness program, Alice leads by example; her physical strength is matched by the strength of her character. The main focus of the class is the performance of a comprehensive routine of exercises to help improve strength, flexibility, endurance, bone density, et cetera.

Alice's Fun and Fitness class also provides a supportive social environment. Besides being a wonderful health care provider, she is an outstanding teacher who demonstrates infinite patience and camaraderie.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Alice Blundon on receiving her outstanding achievement award for everything she has done for more than twenty years in physical fitness and overall wellness in the Town of Harbour Grace.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand in this hon. House to speak about a great event which will be taking place in my district this coming Sunday evening. Celebrity Karaoke is being hosted by the Kinsmen Club of Mount Pearl of which I am a proud member and will be raising funds for three great charities: the K-Rock Children's Trust, the MS Society, and Cystic Fibrosis.

A big thank you to some wonderful corporate partners: Steele Communications, Tol's Time-Out Lounge, and Browning Harvey Limited, as well as to the many community-minded businesses who have donated prizes for ticket draws and the silent auction. Also, a special

thank you to all of the local celebrities who will be taking part in the entertainment, including a number of media personalities, local entertainers, city councillors, community activists, as well as a number of members of this hon. House.

Finally, a huge thank you to the members of the Kinsmen Club of Mount Pearl for the significant role they play in my community. Their efforts certainly do not go unnoticed and they are community heroes, each and every one. I encourage the general public and all members of this hon. House to head out to Tol's Time-Out Lounge this coming Sunday, June 14, at 7:00 p.m. for what promises to be an awesome time for some great charities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Captain Morrissey Johnson who was a Master Mariner from Catalina.

I had the privilege of knowing Captain Johnson over the years. He was certainly a true Newfoundlander and Labradorian who loved this Province and its people dearly.

Captain Johnson's career as a sealing skipper spanned over several decades. He was a champion of the seal hunt who employed hundreds of people. Captain Johnson's vessels were also a mainstay on the Coast of Labrador for many years transporting salt fish to the mainland markets in Quebec and overseas. Captain Johnson and his boat, *The Lady Johnson II*, were involved in seismic activity on Canada's East Coast. Johnson's vessels were chartered by national and international oil exploration companies.

In 1984, Morrissey Johnson was elected as the Member of Parliament representing the riding of Bonavista-Trinity-Conception. He was a remarkable man who always spoke highly of

Newfoundland and Labrador and our people. Captain Morrissey was also a successful entrepreneur who operated a tour boat business from St. John's harbour.

Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, please join me in honouring Captain Morrissey Johnson.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a number of this Province's environmental leaders.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: The Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Awards is an annual celebration of environmental achievements in our Province that raises awareness of the individuals, groups, and businesses that are taking action to protect and sustain our environment. It is a joint initiative sponsored by the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institutes.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure last week of presenting these awards to the following recipients: Bethany Downer of St. John's in the Individual Category; Restoration of Labrador Exploration Sites Project of St. John's in the Community Group or Organization Category; Macdonald Drive Junior High in St. John's in the School Category; Brendan Kelly of Paradise in the Youth Category; the Town of Carmanville Habitat Committee in the Municipal Category; Newfoundland Power Inc. in the Business

Category; and Robert Schmiedendorf of Flatrock for the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Mr. Speaker, each of these winners received a \$1,000 honorarium from the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board to go towards furthering our own environmental projects, or to donate to an environmental cause of their choice.

These individuals, groups, and businesses are truly environmental ambassadors for our Province. They have demonstrated tremendous ingenuity and determination, along with an impressive passion for our environment. It is important to recognize their great accomplishments and encourage others to follow their example.

Mr. Speaker, a healthy and sustainable environment yields healthy people, a stronger economy, more vibrant communities, and a legacy for which we can be proud. We will continue to raise awareness about sustaining our Province for generations to come not only during Environment Week, but every week of the year.

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 as well. We, on this side of the House as well, would like to commend and congratulate the individuals, schools, community organizations, municipalities, and businesses who won awards. As well, Mr. Speaker, I think it is only fitting to recognize those who were nominated but did not win awards.

All of these individuals, organizations, businesses, and schools certainly contribute to helping sustain our environment and adding to ideas and innovation that can help our environment and help to lead to new ideas on how we make sure that the place we live in is a better place when we pass it on to the next generation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. Congratulations, Mr. Speaker, to all who have been recognized this year – organizations or individuals. Congratulations, as well to all the unsung heroes who work every day to ensure this beautiful Province is preserved for future generations. We know the work they do.

To mark the day, World Oceans Day, I salute the winners, I salute their environmental achievements, and I encourage each and every person to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: – reflect on what they can do to preserve our environment and make ours a beautiful Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the annual Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association symposium which took place in St. John's this past weekend.

The theme for this year's provincial symposium was *Fostering Well Being* and brought together foster parents, social workers, representatives of foster care associations, and community partners from across the Province to participate in workshops. It also provided an opportunity for foster parents to network with their peers, share experiences with one another, and celebrate being foster parents.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association plays an extremely

valuable role in our child protection system, facilitating safe and supportive environments for children and youth in care. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the association for its dedication to this vulnerable sector of our population, and all foster parents throughout the Province for opening their hearts and homes to the many children and youth in their time of need. Nurturing, advocacy, teamwork, training, and support are all key to the fostering experience and to the work which is undertaken each and every day to support children and youth who are in care throughout our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I am also very pleased to acknowledge the official launch of the *Foster Care Handbook* which took place at the symposium. It is important that foster families are recognized and supported for the significant role they play in the lives of children and youth who have been welcomed into their homes. Developed through a partnership between the Foster Families Association and the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, the handbook is designed to help foster families understand the policies and procedures that govern the important task at hand – namely the care and protection of youth entrusted to their care.

Our *Foster a Future* campaign has been very successful since its implementation, and continues to create awareness surrounding the need for more foster parents. To date, the campaign has resulted in the approval of 175 new placements in 115 foster homes. Our government will continue the campaign this year through an investment of \$150,000.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association for their tremendous contributions to our Province, and I look forward to a continued partnership built on the best interests of children and youth in care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I would also like to thank the Member for St. Barbe who is the Opposition MHA responsible, but let me speak to this very important statement today. I had the pleasure as well of being at the symposium on Friday night. I can only say what a profound effect that meeting had on me and absolutely everybody in that room when you hear of the stories of foster parents and foster children throughout the Province and the good work that is being done by foster families across the Province.

There was a story told by a young man about his journey going into foster care and the light at the end of the tunnel and the great upbringing that he had because of foster parents. There was not a dry eye in the room.

Again, I want to congratulate the Foster Families Association for the great work they do. I also want to commend government on their campaign Foster a Future. It is a good campaign and it is working, and I hope we can see more there because there is still a need for more homes for children in this Province.

The one thing I would say to the minister, unfortunately – we had a great turnout but we could see more there. If we could find a way to make it easier for foster families and parents to come to St. John's to be a part of this meeting, because it is important. It is basically their professional development and a chance to sit and talk to parents all across the Province.

Again, I commend the association for a great meeting and I commend foster families all across this 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 very pleased to recognize the symposium the Foster Families Association holds every year, and did once again this

weekend. It is such an important opportunity for doing face-to-face training, for networking, and also for finding and giving support to foster families for the challenging role they have taken on, and it is a challenging role. Because of their important role, these families need the best resources we can give them.

Certainly a handbook is a key resource, but there will always be a need for various types of in person training as well as continual support from social workers to ensure the very best outcomes for the children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier said last week that oil prices are higher now than they predicted in their Budget. He said this could allow some flexibility, but on Budget Day oil was trading at \$67 a barrel, today it is \$63.

I ask the Premier: With oil trading lower today than on Budget Day, why are you now claiming that you have Budget flexibility?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we approached our Budget this year we knew we had very difficult, challenging decisions to make, Mr. Speaker. There have been some very hard decisions to make, but we were willing to do that. We made the decisions that we felt we needed to make. As well, we brought forward a five-year financial plan. We have a five-year attrition plan. We have a five-year plan for infrastructure as well, but also with

looking – very early, is what I said. Very early the oil prices had been higher against what had been anticipated, yet we have a long period of time ahead of us before we can make any changes or rash decisions, Mr. Speaker.

My comment is that I am encouraged by that, and if it were to stay that way for the rest of this year then it will put us in a position where we could revisit some of those very difficult decisions that we made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government is quite used to and accustomed to revisiting every plan they put out there, because every plan that we said ends in failure.

The Premier says he will consider reversing his regressive HST hike if oil rebounds but this regressive tax should not be dependent on where oil prices are each day, each week, or each month. This is not the way to manage government finances.

I ask the Premier: Your Budget was tabled just thirty-nine days ago; based on your comments, have you already lost confidence in that document?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: No, Mr. Speaker, not at all. I have not lost confidence in the document.

What I said and I stand by is that we do not control the world oil prices, Mr. Speaker. We do not control them. We rely on a number of factors, assistance and supports for us to make our projections and to lay out our Budget, and we have done that, Mr. Speaker. Over the last decade or so, most years we have done very, very well, very closely, but in the last year the unprecedented drop in oil prices has had a significant impact on many jurisdictions in

Canada, and it is no different here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Talk about revisiting decisions, Mr. Speaker, because the member opposite knows a lot about that. We know time and time and time again he revisits decisions, changes his mind, and changes his position, Mr. Speaker. I will be glad to speak more about them when I get the next chance to get up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have not even seen this Budget voted on in this House of Assembly and already this is a Premier who is looking at changing the contents. I remind the Premier, I would ask him if he is in touch with Ms Judy Manning lately.

The Premier is governing based on the price of oil, which he acknowledges he has no control over. Instead, the Premier should be focused on growing our economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: With all economic indicators pointing in the wrong direction, this is not the time for a regressive HST hike, but the Premier now says he can decide this fall if he will impose the increase or not, clearly electioneering.

I ask the Premier: When exactly will the people of the Province know if your planned HST hike will actually come into effect or not?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I see I will have to take this in very small steps and explain it to the member of the Opposition. I would be quite willing to do that. As I have said, if these trends continue throughout the year, Mr. Speaker, then later in this year we will be able to review, if that is what continues to happen. We obviously cannot make decisions or changes on a very short period of time and I have been very clear about that.

The member opposite accuses us of changing our position. Mr. Speaker, just today we announced the boundary change, a boundary change which he agreed with. No, no, wait now, he did not agree with. Oh no, he did agree with it because he continued to change. He agreed that there could be an election in November. As a matter of fact he said he was quite clear it would not matter to him if we had to move the election to November so we could have an election in 2015, he was fine with it. He has changed his position on that again. That is just a matter of topic that is being in discussion (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing that has clearly changed as a result of this Premier is the fact we now are borrowing at levels never like before in the history of this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: We are now at the highest deficit than ever. That is what has changed in this Province since this Premier has come into office. Government uses an IQ score to determine whether or not to provide services to youth and adults with autism.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: There are no services offered to a youth or adult with autism who has an IQ score of more than seventy, not even respite care. Both the Autism Society as well as Families for Effective Autism Treatment adamantly disagree with this outdated policy.

I ask the Premier: Why do you continue to enforce this exclusionary IQ policy?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we do over here I can tell you is that we make great attempts to work very closely with stakeholder groups throughout the Province that have an interest in a number of varieties of areas. One of the things that we have done this year in our Budget, despite the fact that we are facing very challenging times, is that we did not want to have a significant hard, fast impact on large numbers of public servants. We know that when you do that, the first thing that is impacted is the delivery of programs and services.

Members opposite know about that because they did it back in the early 1990s when 2,000 people were sent to the streets and there were significant impacts —

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: — to programs and services in the Province. We are certainly not going there.

While we have had difficult decisions to make, Mr. Speaker, while we have had challenging decisions to make, we are continuing with the programs and services. We are going to continue to provide best value to the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would think that the Premier, when I asked about the families affected by autism in our Province — he opened his comment by clearly saying that he is listening to people. He did not even address the question, I say, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier again: If the Autism Society as well as Families for Effective Autism Treatment disagree with this outdated policy, why do you continue to enforce this exclusionary IQ policy?

I ask the Premier: Stand on your feet and answer the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, one of the great things that happens when you work with specialized interest groups, especially those that are very close to matters very important such as autism, is that you learn of the evolution of new policies, new ways to do business. It is constant, it constantly happens, and we look at that all the time, Mr. Speaker. We constantly look at: Is there a better way to deliver programs and services? Is there a better method of assessment? Is there a better way so that people can benefit better from it? We are all for that, Mr. Speaker. There are no two ways about it.

Services and programs to autism, how they are delivered, how they are assessed are all part of that, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you we are very open to look at better ways to provide those services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the Premier clearly articulates, he talks about those words, those things of listening to people but when those people are coming with solutions, the Premier is certainly dismissing the advice that they are giving him. Government uses this policy to deny services such as home support, residential options, and behavioural intervention services. Just imagine a fourteen-year-old who is exceptionally bright is challenged by behavioural issues, not getting the support needed, and therefore not being permitted to attend school.

I ask the Premier: Do you think it is appropriate that you are denying this youth and their family any level of support simply because they happen to have an IQ higher than seventy?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: The Leader of the Opposition referenced school-aged children, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: I think we have had a lot of discussion about autism and the acknowledged increase in autistic students in our school systems. There are a variety of methods through the student support services, educational planning, different accommodations for curriculum, as well as student assistant supports, as well as itinerants for autism.

There are a variety of supports, but I certainly acknowledge there are many challenges out there. I would say to the member opposite if we have a student who is not in school, there may be multiple reasons, but I will certainly gladly take the name, try to work with the family, encourage the school district and the schools to work with families, because it is about kids. We do not want them home. We want them in

school. There are a variety of supports available for autism, but we have to continue to work together to make the best of those supports.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This outdated policy assumes that an IQ over seventy is a predictor of a person's adaptable skills and how they can perform and function within a community. We know this is unfair, we know this is untrue. Results of an IQ test do not reflect the severity which an individual may be affected by autism.

I ask the Premier: Will you finally stop using this antiquated policy, instead use an adaptable, functioning assessment?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, if I can echo the words from the Minister of Education, the autism spectrum disorder is a very wide spectrum, and there are obviously challenges inherent to that, but I am happy to say the department is committed to reviewing best practices, and certainly that is one.

It was only a week or two ago that I met out at the front steps with a group out there. They had some issues with regard to the IQ and the testing for that. I had very frank discussions with them. We are always looking at ways to improve services, and certainly if that is one we can do, that is something we are going to review and look at.

Again, we are always open to reviewing best practices, and that is a big one for this government and certainly something I support as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report this past week on Canada's long, sad, history with Aboriginal children attending residential schools. The report contained many recommendations that Prime Minister Harper has not committed to implementing.

I ask the minister: What will he do to ensure the federal government supports and implements the recommendations of the report so Aboriginal victims in this Province receive fair and appropriate compensation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have been watched very closely by many throughout Canada and the work they have done has resulted in ninety-four calls to action.

It was very interesting that when you read the report how it acknowledges, identifies the difference of Newfoundland and Labrador versus the rest of the country. Currently, members of the House are very much aware that there is still an action before the courts. The federal government has now taken steps to actually cause us to be included in that action as well, Mr. Speaker, but we would look for a fair and equal treatment to all people, not only of Newfoundland and Labrador but all persons of Canada, and including our Aboriginal people from Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Aboriginal victims of residential schools in this Province were not included in Prime Minister Harper's apology and compensation package in 2008. They have been shunned by the Prime Minister and they want to make sure it does not happen the second time.

So I guess I ask the Premier: What correspondence have you had with Ottawa in support of Aboriginal victims of residential schools in this Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that to ensure, as I mentioned, a fair treatment to Aboriginals in this Province and ensure that they are treated fairly as they are, and the same as all Canadians and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as I said, is very important to us as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: I can tell you the minister has been engaged in this file. He is working with counterparts and engaged with other stakeholder groups, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that we have fair and equal treatment of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The matter here, Mr. Speaker – just for a point of clarification on this, is that the matters predate Confederation. It is one of the legal discussions that is taking place through this entire process, but it is puts us in a unique circumstance from those in the rest of the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, the last residential schools closed in 1979. The Premier said the TRC report contains ninety-four recommendations, twenty-four of them require action from provincial governments across the country.

I ask the Premier: What plan do you have in place to address the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation report that require action from this provincial government?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we have been taking steps in reconciliation since the early 2000s, as a matter of fact since 2004. In 2005, as a result of that, the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement was reached with us here in the Province.

As well, there were processes that led, a very difficult process, to the New Dawn Agreement. We have reached agreement there, Mr. Speaker, with our Innu partners as well.

So we have already taken steps on reconciliation, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to that. We are assessing the report and the recommendations, as the member opposite has indicated. There are ninety-four calls to action within the report, and many of them do have impacts on provinces and territories. We are continuing to review and assess all those recommendations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, since 2013, residents of Port au Port in the Bay St. George area have been raising concerns about oil leaking from Port au Port from abandoned oil drill sites on Shoal Point. They had no answers from the federal government or the provincial government, but recent pictures distributed through social media show oil leaking into the bay.

I ask the minister: Who is responsible for cleanup of these sites and what immediate actions will be taken?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are certainly aware of the situation. Any time that we hear reports of oil out there, our officials get on that right away, our department gets on it right away.

Even though we did not receive a complaint directly or any information directly, we heard about it on social media. We heard about it on Thursday, June 4. We took immediate action. We sent an official out to the site to have a look. We received a report on that over the weekend, Mr. Speaker. We need more information. We sent the official back to the site again today of where it was reported. We are actually going out with the individual who reported that on social media. We contacted that person directly through social media.

So we are on top of this. We are looking into it. We need to determine how this is happening, if it is a natural occurrence or if it is coming from former oil drill sites. Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, residents of the area have been raising these concerns since back in 2013. There have been stories about this in the newspaper.

I want to ask the minister: How did this situation get so bad, and what is he going to do right now to clean up that situation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Again, Mr. Speaker, just to clarify and get the facts on the table. Oil seepage in that area has been documented since the early 1800s. Shoal Point was the first report –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: There was oil documented there in the area since 1874; J.P. Howley documented it as well. The first drilling occurred in 1898.

So we are finding out exactly where this oil is coming from. That is exactly what we are doing. We are doing the work that needs to be done. We are going to find out the extent of the problem, where the oil is coming from. We will determine then exactly what the next steps are. We are confident in our abilities to find out what is going on and to address the issue, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A recent CBC story chronicles the struggles of Mr. Pat Dunphy of Bay Bulls and his ongoing struggles with workers' compensation. In particular, this recent story shows the totally inadequate transportation being provided to Mr. Dunphy to attend required medical appointments. The video footage shows that the vehicle being used does not have the appropriate tie-downs and leaves Mr. Dunphy bouncing around in his wheelchair, thus placing him at significant risk to his fragile health.

I ask the minister: Besides simply making a phone call and asking a service provider if they have accessible transportation, what specific measures does the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission take, such as inspections, to ensure that accessible transportation provided to injured workers is safe?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

While I cannot speak to individual cases – I, too, saw the story to which the member is referring to. I cannot speak to individual cases; however, I can say that cases are very complicated. Not only with regard to the services that are provided, for example, with Metrobus and

public transportation, but also medical files and what has gone into a person's injury and how that is accounted for.

So while I cannot get into specifics, I would be more than happy to have a discussion around what is done. I know again getting back to the geographical area where you live in, if there are other opportunities to avail of public transportation that would be something that is taken into account as well. Again, I cannot really get down in the weeds, as I cannot discuss individual cases.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate that, but I was not asking about a specific case. I was asking about what the government does to ensure that accessible transportation is safe for people to use, so I ask the minister again.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

First and foremost, I would say to the member, we look to see if public transportation is accessible. That would be the starting point, but again, that is just one piece of it. Assessing the person's injury and how that came about, that is another part of the work that the Commission does as well. So it is a multi-faceted approach. There is not one simple answer, but like I say, one of the starting points would certainly be the accessibility of public transportation in that person's geographical area. Again, I do not want to add commentary to the story, but I think that was done in this case.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It may have been considered accessible, but the question is, was it adequate, and was the vehicle safe, and it should be inspected.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the transportation issue, Mr. Dunphy has been fighting with workers' compensation for the past seven years to get modifications made to his home in order to make it accessible – seven years, I say.

So I ask the minister: Don't you think that having an injured worker wait for seven years to have accessibility in his home is unacceptable, and what do you, as minister, intend to do about it?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am not aware of all the individual pieces of this case. I do know if the member across the way is – he is talking as if he is, because, of course, as I said before, cases are very complex. To be able to stand in the House and speak to an individual case, obviously there are huge challenges around workers' compensation commission and the types of people we are dealing with, vulnerable people, and people who have gone through rough bouts in their life, and that is why we want – people look at workplace health and safety as challenges. I look at it as opportunity. Places we can improve, and we have been doing that the last number of years, and certainly we will want to create positive change in all aspects.

So again, I cannot speak to the specific case, but I feel for the gentleman as well. I want to make sure that all services that are able to be provided to him certainly are. I think that is the case, but I would be more than willing to take a look into it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

Stats Can labour force survey shows the Province is in its nineteenth consecutive month of year-over-year job losses. There are 2,300 fewer people working this May than last May. Our unemployment rate is over twice the national average.

I ask the Premier: You try to blame this economic mess you have created on falling oil prices, but this job-loss trend started in November 2013; now what is your excuse?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, everyone recognizes as projects develop and scale down, there are going to be some changes in the workforce within the Province. A very interesting stat, the past three years have been the highest terms of average annual employment since at least 1976.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the indicators show that the Province has been very strong in that regard. As we look forward to other projects coming on stream, we look for the same results.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

Government promised an era of prosperity, but there are fewer people working today than when they were elected in 2011. On March 10, the Premier said he would release a workforce development action plan in the coming weeks. That was three months ago.

I ask the Premier: Why aren't you treating this job crisis with the urgency it deserves?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Let me continue with a few other stats. Mr. Speaker, 2013 and 2014 showed the lowest unemployment rates in this Province since stats have been recorded. That speaks to it.

We have job vacancy reports that are out there, the labour market information, all which help to inform individuals, businesses, and companies on the way to move forward. It is all about developing a positive work climate within the Province, Mr. Speaker

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, last week in the House we debated a PMR on the Northern cod fishery, which our people fished for over 500 years until the 1992 moratorium. I was informed by the former Fisheries Minister in a letter last June that a draft rebuilding plan for Northern cod would be completed by the end of 2014.

I ask the current minister: Has this plan been drafted? If so, when does he intend to release it?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, we all know the history of the Province and how important the cod industry was in the past. The cod industry, as we debated in this House last week, is extremely important to the economy today. It is not as important as it was in the past, but extremely important as we move back into the groundfish sector.

In answer to the question from the hon. member, I will get the answer to that and I will report back to him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Serious concerns have been raised by Municipalities NL, the Mayor of Corner Brook, and the mayors and councils of many towns across rural Newfoundland about the negative impact removing seven electoral seats from the Island of Newfoundland outside the Northeast Avalon will have at a time when residents are facing an economic and social tsunami. I wish I could ask the Opposition Leader as well, but House rules do not permit that.

So I ask the Premier: Will he pull back from putting into law the recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sorry, I did not hear you recognize me.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone through a process in the last several months, since January, and brought a bill to the House of Assembly here. There were amendments to the bill. It was debated here in the House. It was passed in the House. Members opposite, including the Member for the Third Party, were in support of reducing the number of seats in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: We have gone through a process in bringing a bill forward and passing legislation in the House, as we do with every other piece of legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Premier certainly has a wonderful imagination.

I ask him: Why did you and the Liberal Party conspire in the middle of the night of January 22 to cut democratic representation for rural Newfoundland at a time when its residents are facing such serious socioeconomic troubles?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am not sure what the member opposite is referring to. If she is referring to my comment about her public comments that there should be a reduction in the House of Assembly, I could gladly remind her – well, I can remind you because it was in March 2013 when CBC reported that the member opposite had said the number of seats can be eliminated without hurting democracy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

PREMIER DAVIS: She said she looks at places like Nova Scotia, Ontario, and other provinces, that MLAs have much more people in their ridings than we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador, in districts of Newfoundland and Labrador. The member opposite has spoken publicly before about reducing the number of seats in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, as has the Leader of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: The difference in her and I, is I took action to correct it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The difference was they put a number on it when they did not have the right to do it.

Mr. Speaker, today finds word that an environmental disaster involving abandoned, orphan wells in the Shoal Point area of the Province is underway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: Still we have government doing nothing about it. The capped wells are leaching oil and other chemicals into the ocean environment.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the government: What is the department doing to address the situation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Again, Mr. Speaker, further to the answer that I gave earlier, we need to find out exactly what is going on there. So we are on the site, we are looking at what is happening. If there is a cleanup required, we will clean it up.

I have seen the video on social media. It does not look like a widespread environmental problem, but we need to determine exactly what is going on, what needs to be done, where it is coming from, and, Mr. Speaker, we will take action then. We are still in the preliminary stages of finding out what is going on, and when we do, we will take action.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

How much time has to pass before government acts on this, I wonder? How much is this clean up going to cost the taxpayer? Because that is who it is going to come back to is the taxpayers' pocket. Who is going to be liable for a spill where there is no ownership that exists right now?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we are very proactive with regard to this problem. We jumped on it right away. Before anybody even reported to us, Mr. Speaker, we had people in the field looking at the problem, trying to find out exactly what is going on. We are gathering information, like I say. We do not know the extent of the problem or where it is coming from.

There have been natural-occurring seepages in that area for over 100 years and probably since the beginning of the ice age, Mr. Speaker. So we need to find out what is going on. We do know there has been exploration going on there over the years. Where is it coming from? We will determine that, and we will make decisions then based on that information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that this government does not have an answer.

So I will ask the minister again: How much is the taxpayer going to be liable for in the cleanup of this mess on the West Coast?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation for a very quick answer.

MR. CRUMMELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

It is way too early to even have that conversation. We do not even know the scope of the problem. We have seen a little bit on video, on social media, Mr. Speaker. It does not look that extensive right now, but we need to find out what is indeed happening.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken responsibility getting out there and finding out exactly what the problem is. So we are taking a lead on this. We will get the answers to the questions when the time is right. Mr. Speaker, we will report back to the House and certainly to the people in the region who are most concerned about this issue.

Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

MS MICHAEL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, on a point of order.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During Question Period the Premier was talking about the debate on Bill 42 and said clearly that all parties in this House had supported that bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: The record will show that our party did not support Bill 42. We voted against it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Act, Bill 13.

As well, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act, Bill 11.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Legal Aid Act, Bill 9.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution relating to the raising of loans by the Province, Bill 10.

Mr. Speaker, I also give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act No. 2, Bill 12.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012, Bill 14.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move the following private member's resolution, seconded by the Member for Port au Port:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's decision to invest in the Province's thriving tourism industry through initiatives that include providing for a \$2 million increase in the tourism marketing budget, bringing the total budget for tourism marketing to \$13 million.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that the private member's motion just introduced will be the one that we will debate this coming Wednesday, Private Members' Day.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask leave of the House – I missed a step in the proceedings where I would like to table the Electoral Boundaries Commission report, with leave of the House.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave.

Tabling of Documents

MR. KING: Okay. I so table that document now.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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 residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS motorists travelling Routes 70, 74, and 80 in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde have difficulty seeing line markings at night; and

WHEREAS motorists travelling on Route 70, 74, and 80 fear for their safety; and

WHEREAS government has failed to address this problem;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure line painting is complete on Route 70, 74, and 80 in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde without further delay.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand this afternoon and enter that petition on behalf of the constituents of the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde. This issue arisen two or three weeks ago when the plants started day and night shifts in Old Perlican and Bay de Verde, and Winterton in some cases.

What is happening – as we have seen outside yesterday and earlier today – is fog is a major issue. When you go to the tip of the Bay de Verde Peninsula, it is a common occurrence.

Coming off shift in the early mornings and the late evenings, it is very hard to distinguish the lines because the line markings are just totally gone from the winter season.

Mr. Speaker, my office has been in contact with the department and we urge the department to have the line paintings done, specifically in these areas, without further delay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition again today related to health care in the St. George's and surrounding area.

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

WHEREAS there 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 area causing them undue hardship; and

WHEREAS the absence of a doctor or nurse practitioner in the area leaves seniors and others 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, as members of this House know, I presented this petition a number of times. I am going to continue to present this petition until something is done to solve this problem. The people in St. George's have been without a permanent doctor in their community for about

half a year now. The neighbouring clinic in Jeffrey's has not had a doctor in about a year-and-a-half now. So it is a serious situation, caused the people of those communities a lot of problems, a lot of grief, and a lot of problems with their health.

Also, it causes problems in Stephenville. Because these people do not have a doctor in their community, they end up going to the emergency room in Stephenville. That has caused a lot of problems in that facility, as well as people have had to wait long times to see a doctor there in the clinic. People have told me that they have had to wait all day to see a doctor.

So it is a serious matter when people cannot get the basic medical care that they need. They cannot get prescriptions filled, they cannot get medication they need or treatment they need for minor illnesses, which sometimes become worse because they do not get immediate treatment. So it is a serious problem. I would say it is a crisis situation for the people in St. George's and Stephenville. Concerns are also being raised about the overall level of service that people are getting in the Bay St. George area.

So I just want to raise those concerns on behalf of those people, and I am going to continue to raise them until something is done to address this situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to now call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, that this House approves in general the Budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

MR. SPEAKER: Resuming debate on the Budget Speech.

I recognize the hon. the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is my first opportunity to speak to the Budget. I know it was some time ago, and I want to thank all the members for their concern and everything. When you have a bit of a health concern, it kind of distracts you away from the topic at hand. So this is going to be my – I think it is probably my first or second time to actually talk to the Budget.

Again, an awful lot of time, it seems like, has passed by since the Budget was presented. I think earlier in the House we heard that it was somewhere in the order of thirty-nine days. So, Mr. Speaker, I guess I will be on my feet this time around talking on behalf of some of the issues in St. John's East and what my constituents have been telling me over the last couple of days, and in particular what I have been hearing around the district.

So that would be number one, and number two, my own views as to the reasons how come I cannot support this Budget because I think that this Budget is really quite disturbing and it has taken us on a completely different path than what we were several years ago in this Province, Mr. Speaker. The simple fact is the numbers tell it for themselves, where we have gone and where we have been and probably where we are going to be going over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to quantify my remarks basically by starting off talking about 911, because the 911 system in this Province that everybody have requested is simply not the system that we are going to be getting. I have asked the minister this on several occasions and he says that because it is a budgetary requirement, we are not going to exactly know how this money is going to be spent in the future nor should we be really concerned about it, knowing that we have a constant ask on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, there is a reason why we have a constant ask on this side of the House is because everybody deserves fair treatment when it comes to the 911 system in this Province. We find, of course, in this Budget that there is no initiative

on the part of government to lead on this particular issue.

I also found that in my conversations with people out there that it is completely different when you pick up the phone in St. John's and call 911 looking for assistance and if you happen to be out in Gander or some other rural municipality out there when you call for help. There is a difference between a call taker, Mr. Speaker, and a dispatcher. In St. John's, you will have a true dispatching system. In St. John's, you will get somebody who will follow up that phone call and still check back with you and see if you are in trouble. If you are in the rural part of the Province, you do not get that. Sometimes you may get the call back afterwards just as a bit of a follow-up, but other than that you do not get it.

Mr. Speaker, it is our belief on this side of the House that because the people of the Province are going to be paying for this system, it is not going to be run out of any government money at all. It is going to be paid out of seventy five cents per phone call. The same people who are paying that seventy-five cents should have the rights to deserve exactly what kind of system that they are going to be getting in the end.

Mr. Speaker, why not give consumers what they deserve when it comes to this? I believe that government while they will be fronting an initiative like this, we know that the money is going to be forthcoming from consumers to help pay for this system. So it should be the consumers that should have the final say, and right now we do not see that final say, for example, when it comes to the representation that is even on the board. Several questions still arise from it.

When we got down through the Budget documents, in particular through Estimates, I also was shocked to learn that funding for something near and dear, I guess, was going to be pulled. I am talking about the Culture and Heritage Estimates and I am talking about the money that government had set aside for the placing of the Caribou Memorial at Gallipoli. We know that anniversary is sadly coming upon us very soon. I figured that government would have done the right thing in this particular case, and they would have left the money in there in

perpetuity if it had to be, to help pay for the Caribou Memorial. I would certainly hope that government would still be fronting an effort, giving it 110 per cent to make sure that this Caribou Memorial is going to be erected down at the Gallipoli site knowing that we lost thirty or forty of our boys down there, men at the time, the cream of our youth in helping to build this Province.

We lost a generation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians down there who were down there to do good. Unfortunately, we do not have a proper memorial down there. Right now the government of Turkey says that there is going to be a system of plaques set up, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that for the other sites that we have around this world where the caribou is displayed, that one of these days the caribou symbol will be there to be displayed again. So I encourage government to pursue that, but I certainly had wished that government had left the funding in place for this caribou to happen one day in the future rather than to have it lost.

Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of weeks of course I have talked to an awful lot of people as well when it comes to health care. It is here I think that government is going to be having an issue. Of course, well whenever you are sick or whenever one of our viewers may find themselves sick you get the opportunity, in some cases, to get out there and talk to their health care provider.

In my case, I have had several conversations with my doctor over the last little while. One of the things that he tells me right off the bat is that there is not enough money right now in the system. He is a doctor who is operating out of a medical clinic with about 31,000 clientele. For the number of doctors who are there, they tell me that the more doctors they even add, the more clientele they are going to have, and there are not enough doctors at any one time to particularly handle the caseload that they have now.

He tells me right now that one of the most important issues that they are dealing with that they keep asking themselves over the last ten, twelve years or so that he has been in the medical system is the amount of representation, for example, that you would get from the

provincial government in its argument, and it should be carrying forth the argument to the federal government. Over the last couple of years – and I am pretty sure that our viewers would certainly know this – there has been in the order of \$36 billion in cuts that the federal government made to our health care system. Right now we are the ones who are paying for it. We pay for it in longer lines, longer wait times, less time to see a doctor and, in some cases, a rushed health prognosis.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to bring that forward to encourage government, to demand of government that they bring forth our argument as a Province, that there is a need for more funding for our health care system and to make sure that these arguments are carried forth on their behalf because, of course, I hear it every other day.

One of the things that I will note in the Budget talking about health – and it only takes you to get sick before you actually notice it. Mr. Speaker, I guess in some ways there is some guilt on the fact there that I am a smoker over the last three weeks since I took sick. Of course, there is plenty of opportunity to quit so basically over the last little while we have managed to keep that pack of nails away from us, and I am feeling a little bit better for it in spite of sounding a little bit better for it.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I have note comes from the Budget document itself, that this government collected \$157 million in tobacco tax last year. They are also projecting this year to collect \$157 million in tobacco tax as well. I had somebody ask me about that and I told them I really do not have an answer for you, but the obvious sense to me is that there has been no lessening of the amount of smokers that are out there. It is obviously a better case for government to get at the arguments against smoking and take some of that money and put back into the initiatives against smoking too at the same time.

It was an interesting number, Mr. Speaker, when I saw it; \$157 million in tobacco tax collected last year against \$157 million-plus that is projected to be collected for this year. The question has to be asked about the strategies to

help quit. Again, there is no change in the number from last year when it comes to that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It does get a little bit loud in here.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to health I also have to ask a question about government, about where they are going with P3's. One of the things that was most alarming that we found in the Budget was in Transportation Estimates, and of course I hear this from my constituents from time to time, it is about the future tax load that the government is taking on.

One of the things that we found in Transportation and Works Estimates was the simple fact that this government took our membership in the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships. There is an interesting name that we found out – I think it was in this particular department that it was something in the order of \$35,000 to \$40,000 that they paid out in their membership here through Transportation and Works.

Mr. Speaker, we all know, we have read so many of the reports now when it comes to the various Auditors General reports out there that talk about P3's, the true cost of what happens when government invests in public-private partnerships. In the end run, any of the Auditors General in this country that have done reports on this, they would all tell you that it costs the taxpayer more in the long run than what it does in the short term.

What are we telling the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador when we are talking about government sinking its money, for example, into long-term care? What are we telling them? Well, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, through this Budget, is telling you right now that it does not look like it is going to cost you very much money upfront; however, the payoff for the infrastructure and the services that you are going to be getting in the long-term care home in the future, it is going to cost you. It is going to cost

you a lot more than what government can actually provide for right now.

Government really needs to think about the amount of debt load that it is taking on, Mr. Speaker. In this particular case, they are taking on a debt load for a generation. We have an older population in this Province. We have an aging population in this Province, but we have a government who ignored the situation for so long now that age of the population has finally caught up with the expenditures that the government had in the first place; and now government, seeing that it has a problem that it does right now, has no other choice but to spend the money upfront, find some way to get it done and to cost the generation in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is acceptable for this government to be coming out and saying just like the Harper Government did that it is okay for your grandchild to be looking after it when their generation comes along because that is essentially what we are saying with P3's, and that is unacceptable. That is another reason why I will not be supporting it.

Mr. Speaker, in itself, it was troublesome to find out that the Department of Transportation and Works had paid for membership in the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships too because at the same time it begs the question exactly where the Department of Transportation and Works is going to be in the next little while. Are we going to end up having toll roads in this Province – I will ask the minister. Perhaps he can answer that question in the House: Are we going to end up having toll roads? Are we going to end up seeing services for the Department of Transportation and Works privatized in the long run as well because they took out the membership in this Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships?

Again, this is going to cost us, as taxpayers, more than what government is actually letting on because right, up front, it sounds like it is such a little cost, but later on it is going to cost the generations dearly.

Mr. Speaker, in my door to door adventures over the last couple of weeks since the Budget – like I said, it seems so long ago now, thirty-nine or forty days ago. One of the things I did hear

about is anger, of course, over the HST off heat and light. It is one of these initiatives that consumers of Newfoundland and Labrador had signed on too many years ago, presented a petition in this House to have the tax on heat and light removed. What did this government do? They removed the taxation several years ago in one of the budgets, and only this year decided to reinstitute the tax on heat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is getting a little bit loud in here. I do not know if the members across the way like my remarks or not, but either way it is my chance to speak to it, so I will.

Mr. Speaker, there is plenty of anger and angst over the re-addition, if you will, of the tax on heat. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador thought they had signed a contract with this government when it came to the removal of the tax on heat. Mr. Speaker, this is disposable income that was going directly back into everybody's pockets. It was going back directly into the economy again, because we all know this money was being re-spent again. Everybody knows the money was out there actually generating jobs.

Mr. Speaker, if you were an oil heat user or if you were an electricity user, either way, it was only measured by your consumption of how much money you were going to be getting back. It begs the question about the agreements, if you will, that we have with our Province, with the people who govern us too, what right have we in the form of taxation that we are getting right now.

It is my belief that the government should reverse its decision on this reprehensible tax. They should go back to the way it used to be with no tax on heat or light, on a basic necessity of life. Mr. Speaker, it is the same as taxing food, in my eyes.

Mr. Speaker, the question still revolves around fair taxation levels versus road and bridgework, for example. Another thing I certainly heard

about was the amount of money that was actually going into roads. A lot of people I talk to certainly know the state of our highways, they certainly know the state of the bridgework.

We heard government last week put a little bit of money back into, for example, the putting down of asphalt on some of the bridgework. We know government has ignored this problem too long. The Auditor General has already stated – he put the number, I think, at close to \$900 million in his report last year talking about the state of roads and bridges. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador, now getting ready to enjoy the summer holiday travel season, will certainly get to know intimately our roads, our highways, and our bridges as regards to the state of the asphalt.

We certainly know the \$66 million back into roads that we are going to be seeing this year does not match, in no uncertain terms, Mr. Speaker, the almost \$3 billion in money, in gas taxes, for example, that have been collected in various Budgets since, probably about 1997. You can put pretty much close to \$3 billion on that, but again only \$66 million back into roads.

Mr. Speaker, we thought this year we would also see a plan for roads. We thought we would hear about that in the Budget. We were really let down about that. One of the things this party pressed for was a plan for roads.

The Auditor General commented on the simple fact that there were no plans for roads. He could not find any evidence of a plan for roads. Hence, we ended up about \$900 million in the hole when it came to road and bridgework maintenance that still has not been carried out. Government now has to find a way of catching up on that particular amount as well. We paid for it already. We gave the money to government upfront. Government did not invest it back into it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about environment and conservation as well in the short time that I have left. I keep saying this line, and I keep saying it as a reminder to government. Today, of course, we get another reminder when it comes to environment and conservation. Never in our history has the environment of our Province been under so much pressure as what it is right now.

As evidence to that, one of the reasons why we, on this side of the House, asked for a moratorium on fracking, number one, and asked for the panel to start taking submissions, was a case that we are seeing today. One of the inherent things we found wrong with fracking, not only does it damage water supplies, but people tend to walk away from the mess they leave us. Mr. Speaker, today is evidence of that fact. I think everybody in this House should be absolutely shocked and absolutely abhorred with the simple fact of the pictures we saw this week.

What we had was capped wells from many years ago that were abandoned, orphaned, as they are known in the industry, that are now leaking. What had happened to those wells – what I am told happened to those wells is simple, the land eroded to the point where these wells ended up out in the water. Of course, Mr. Speaker, with no protection around them they corroded. It is going to make no difference whether they are on land or on the ocean, they still would have corroded in the first place.

What we have here now is an unmitigated disaster off our coast over on the beautiful Port au Port Peninsula. The oil is still flows and government still has not acted on it. They came out the other day with legislation, Bill 2, that we can comment a little bit more on later on when that piece of legislation comes up again in Committee, but it begs a lot of people to ask, when it comes to fracking, why should we say yes to it if we are going to be left with a future disaster like this fifty years down the road? Because that is what this disaster left us.

What we need to see from this government, Mr. Speaker, in this Budget, it certainly would have entitled government to seek more protection for water resources. We would have loved to see source water protection legislation or at least money put aside for that. We would have liked to see government put more money into the protection of caribou herds. We have the red wine herd in trouble.

We would have loved to have seen more enforcement and monitoring. We know government is starting to take steps here but it is still not enough. We would certainly like to see government put more money into environmental liabilities and included as part of debt. We

know we have an awful long future for us to worry about when it comes to fracking, mine waste, holding ponds, and closed mills.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is up. Again, I cannot support this Budget based on this, certainly not with the financial mess that we are left right now.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Deputy House Leader

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to call from the Order Paper, Motion 7, to move pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, June 8, 2015.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. Deputy House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, as well, I call Motion 8, to move pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Monday, June 8, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. tonight.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. Deputy House Leader, we will resume with debate on the Budget?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes.

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

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

When I first began to speak to Budget 2015, Mr. Speaker, I was going through a list of items of discretionary spending department by department where this Budget actually increased the spending from last year. The bottom line of this discretionary spending, which means the minister is calling the shots in each particular department on what they will spend money on, the top levels at or near the minister's office, and there were 106 items.

This is a Budget; it is the largest Budget in our history, over \$8 billion. It is the largest deficit in our history, over \$1 billion, and it seeks to increase the HST to be the highest in Canada, at not just 15 per cent, but because of the way we compound tax on tax in this Province, we will end up with the highest harmonized sales tax of all of Canada as a result of this Budget. So when government talks about the tough times there is, I thought it would be useful to go through the Budget to just see what they are doing to restrain themselves. None of these increases are absolutely necessary if the ministers would simply hold the line on these discretionary expenses. The total of 106 of these expenses comes to more than \$30 million a year.

We are seeing the boundary debate being rushed through. We are seeing boundaries being changed and the Premier said this is so we can save – the Premier said \$10 million, but I understand that was when he was talking about getting rid of ten seats. Getting rid of eight seats, the amount of money that we are going to save would be even less, yet on this increase in discretionary spending – and I will go through this momentarily – this government preaches one thing and then practices another. It preaches restraint and then it practises waste. It preaches personal responsibility and then it takes no responsibility for everything that has happened to us. It did not happen to us. It was caused to

us by the management or, more accurately put, the mismanagement of this government.

To take up where I left off – since I only have a couple of pages of these left, that will leave enough time so I can review the building maintenance or the lack of maintenance of the public buildings in this Province, which is even more timely today with the CBC report, which talks about the tens of millions of dollars that we are spending on rent, primarily in the Avalon Region. Rent on real estate that maybe if we were maintaining our own buildings more properly, we would not need to rent this real estate. We would not have vacant building owned by the taxpayers in this Province littered all over the place, as the Auditor General pointed out in 2011, four years ago.

Mr. Speaker, in the Minister's Office in Early Childhood Education, page 16.3. The minister – who I understand is going to follow me, so this will give him a launching point. In the Minister's Office, the budget was \$272,000 last year. It is going to go up to \$322,000. So the minister has decided that he needs an extra \$50,000 on \$270,000 to run – that is a 20 per cent increase in that particular line item.

In Executive Support, the minister has decided that he needs to go up from \$870,000 to \$939,000. So that is \$69,000. In Corporate Services, the minister has decided that he needs to go up from \$1,393,000 to \$1,448,000. That is an extra \$55,000.

In policy – why on earth would this government, a dying government in the last year and in the last six months of its mandate, need to spend an extra \$43,000 on policy for early childhood education? It is not that they are not spending enough already – the budget for policy alone is \$364,700, and that is going to be ballooned up to a bloated \$407,500. That is in that department, Mr. Speaker.

When we get to Health and Community Services – and health care is critically important. Health care consumes nearly forty cents of every dollar that we spend in this Province, and health care is very important to people, but on the top end – this is not front-line workers, this is not providing medication, this is not providing additional doctors or nurses or support staff.

This is on the top line in administrative and corporate spending. So, Health and Community Services on administrative salaries we are going to from \$1,667,000 to \$1,731,000. So that is another \$60,000 to \$70,000.

Corporate Services is going to go from \$4.8 million to \$5.03 million; that is an extra 5 per cent in Corporate Services. In regional administration, from \$1,238,000 to \$1.8 million; that is \$600,000 more discretionary spending that we have, even though we have consolidated health boards, so we are supposed to realize savings.

Mr. Speaker, in Population Health we are going to, on the top end, we are going to spend from an increase of \$1.38 million to \$1.53 million. So that is an extra \$150,000. If we look at the government's results in the health of our population over the last twelve years it is absolutely deplorable, and the only time that we really seem to get worked up about is when a travel writer writes about people in St. Anthony and the Jungle Jim's being overweight, so that gets everybody absolutely worked up into a lather, and meanwhile what we should be doing, we should be paying more attention to population health over the last twelve years.

You do not get an instant result when you improve population health through exercise, weight control, smoking, drinking – it takes a few years – but it does not take twelve years. Certainly after three or four, five or six or seven years there should be some benefit. We are seeing no benefit in the overall health of our population from all of the spending that this government has been doing. That is because it has been misplaced spending. It has been administrative spending. It is not focused on an area to get us the best results.

Mr. Speaker, in Justice, we know that crime is literally out of control, particularly in St. John's. We saw waves of impaired drivers just this past weekend, two here, and three there, and one someplace else on a fairly small population. Yet we see Justice spending more on Executive Support. We see more for lawsuits – legal fees for lawsuits going from \$4.8 million to \$5.1 million, an extra \$300,000 budgeted for lawsuits this year for this government to presumably defend itself. We see an increase in the

expenses for fish and wildlife, \$3.6 million going up to \$4 million. That is \$400,000.

Mr. Speaker, it was only a handful of years ago that this government decided to take on certain federal responsibilities. The federal government is responsible for fisheries, for the salmon, for the trout, and for our waterways. So it is not good enough that we would take over fisheries research – which we do not do anything with in any event because we say the feds are not doing a good enough job – we have to take over fisheries enforcement when really that is a federal responsibility. The feds ought to have been made accountable and held accountable for us.

Why should we be taking our valuable hard-earned taxpayers' dollars to pay for something that Ottawa should be paying for in the first place? We do not hear a squeak from this government to force Ottawa to live up to their constitutional obligations to us as a Province, Mr. Speaker.

We also see an increase in spending – and this is at the top level, not for any front-line workers, not for any benefits to anybody. Executive Support for Labour Relations is gone up \$50,000. Administrative salaries have gone up another \$25,000.

Then we get to Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, a strategic plan going from \$934,000 to \$1.2 million. That is around a quarter of a million dollars. Local Governance has gone up from \$371,000 to \$523,000; policy from \$560,000 to \$634,000; infrastructure and waste from \$452,000 to \$516,000. Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on and on. It is almost like a tsunami of spending with this government. It seems like they cannot find an idea that they cannot spend money on – anything that happens, anything that is available.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers over a period of time – this is not to say that government does not waste money in huge gobs, \$10 million or \$12 million on the Roddickton pellet plant, like huge mistakes. This is the incremental waste, the erosion of the dollars of the taxpayers. So this comes out to more than \$30 million a year of additional discretionary spending. It did not create a single job. It did not save a single

dollar. It did not improve people's health. It did not improve the status of education in our Province. It did not improve tourism in our Province.

These are top-line dollars, \$30 million a year on a bloated \$8 billion Budget. It is really tragic that we have cut through more than \$20 billion in oil royalties, mineral royalties. We have seen the best of times and now we are facing the worst of times, because we were wasteful. This government was wasteful during a time when we had money. If all of the money had gone into infrastructure as this government says it has, which clearly it has not, then we would not have the situation we find with our public buildings.

Mr. Speaker, the very first Auditor General's report I reviewed was the one from 2011, not long after being elected. One of the areas that really attracted my attention was the public buildings owned by the people of this Province and how they are not being maintained by this government. The Auditor General said in his 2011 report that the people of the Province own 854 buildings in 385 sites. So most places have one building, some have two, some have three, and the replacement cost of those buildings was \$1,940,000,000. Roughly, the same amount of money as this government put into the pension plan they got from Ottawa. Then the stock market crashed, and we lost a third of it overnight.

Of the 854 buildings, the Auditor General – he did a review since this government came to power. The Auditor General looked at the 2000 report. This government came to power in 2003. So the Auditor General did a report in 2004. This was the report in 2011, which is seven years later. It is like a comparison, a before and after, and say: What did we recommend in 2004? I believe it was Mr. Noseworthy who was the Auditor General in 2004.

The AG said in 2004 that, "Government owned buildings are in need of significant repairs." He also said department officials "have expressed concern about the lack of funding provided to maintain Government's buildings." This was in 2004 when we had no money.

They also said, the required maintenance and capital alterations and improvements were not

being performed and government buildings were deteriorating – 2004. Also, the Auditor General found the government’s “... database of buildings is not complete ...”. The database was not complete, so we did not know what we had and where we had it. This is being managed by Transportation and Works. So Transportation and Works is in charge of these buildings, of looking after them.

At that point the Auditor General said, “The Department does not use a risk based system to identify and prioritize its maintenance work.” So, Mr. Speaker, that could mean you are going to mow the lawn instead of fixing the roof. It is kind of nice to mow the lawn but if the roof is leaking, why wouldn’t you fix the roof first? If the windows are gone, then fix the windows that are gone, do not paint the fence. You need to prioritize your maintenance program.

Mr. Speaker, the ordinary homeowner can easily understand this. You have repairs that need to be done to your home, you have a certain amount of money. Where am I going to spend it? I am going to spend it in the most important areas where it is going to get me the best result. You need to know what is more important. This government did not know in 2004, what were the most important areas to fix up and what were the least important.

The AG also said, the Department of Transportation and Works “does not have the information necessary for a comprehensive plan to address the nature, amount and timing of future capital expenditures.” They did not know what was going on in 2004.

They also said, “The Department does not have a plan to devolve Government of its vacant buildings.” That means we do not know how to get rid of the ones we are not using anymore because we do not know where they are, we do not know what they are worth, and we do not know what they are costing.

That was the background to the 2011 report as reported in 2004. Seven years later, what do we have? Seven years later the AG said the department had taken some action on the concerns raised in 2004. One of the more troubling areas was that in 2011 the Auditor General said there are twenty-five vacant

buildings that require maintenance service, vacant. Eight of them require a utility resource despite being unoccupied. The building is vacant and the lights are on.

Wouldn’t an ordinary consumer, if you are going to move away from your home, even for the winter – for your summer home, you are likely going to drain it all down. You are probably going to get some windshield wash or anti-freeze and put it in the toilet bowls. You are going to shut off the water. You may not turn off the electricity completely but for sure you will stop spending money when you are not using it. Why doesn’t ordinary common sense in maintaining buildings apply to this government? I do not know. I do not know if anybody knows why.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. J. BENNETT: It does not apply.

One thing which is really staggering in the amount of repairs and maintenance that was required – in the 2004 Auditor General’s report, the AG said the deferred maintenance, what you need to do to fix up the buildings, comes to \$261 million. You have \$2 billion worth of buildings, you need \$261 million in 2004 to fix them up. So you would think with all the money we ran through in the next seven years, we would have the buildings all fixed up. Not true!

In 2011, there is over twice as much remaining to be done. It is going to cost half a billion dollars. That is \$549 million now to fix up the buildings, when it was only \$261 million seven years earlier. Not only did they not maintain the buildings, they did not fix them up. They let it continue to run down.

In the 2011 report, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was even more precise. The AG said in 2011, over the next five years there are \$306 million of maintenance you need to do on these buildings. You need to do \$306 million in the next five years. One would think you would take maybe the \$306 million, probably divide it by five, and that would be like \$60 million a year. So you would average your maintenance over the next five-year period.

What did they budget instead? In 2012-2013 they budgeted \$43 million, in 2013-2014 they budgeted \$43 million, and in 2014-2015 they budgeted \$44 million. That is not to say what they actually did, that is what they budgeted. This year they have budgeted \$43 million. It is almost like this department has a fixation to say: well, pick a number, guess a number. Let's go with \$40 million, \$43 million, or \$44 million.

Doing the math, Mr. Speaker, this means of all of the maintenance that was required from four years ago, being \$306 million, in four years, including this year, the government has budgeted only \$175 million. So now we have a shortfall on maintenance. Surely, everybody understands that if you do not fix up your home – if you do not repair the leaks in the roof, if you do not repair the leaking waterlines, if you do not maintain the home properly, windows broken – you are going to get more and more deterioration. This government has not done a very good job of managing the economy generally and certainly has done a very poor job of managing our public buildings.

Mr. Speaker, it is almost like there is nobody in charge. It would be absolutely encouraging to find a single department where the government had a plan, where the government had a budget, where somebody was actually in charge, and when they said at the end of the year this is what we decided to do, this is what we got done. We fell a little bit short, it cost a little bit more, but at least you would know where you wanted to go.

If you do not know where you are – which the AG showed they did not know where they were in 2004. They did not have a strategic plan. If you do not know where you are, if you do not know where you are going to go, and you underfund it in any event, this means that \$2 billion worth of real estate on replacement costs in over 800 buildings is literally going to waste. There are twenty-five of them empty, eight with the heat and lights still on.

Then we get a report from the CBC today which says how much we are leasing. We are leasing buildings all over the place when we are not maintaining our own. I understand it is not that glamorous to fix up buildings. It might not be a photo op for the minister. I understand that

coming in on budget might not be that glamorous. It is nice to do the photo ops and it is nice to cut the ribbons, but it is also nice and it is absolutely critical to maintain the people's money, maintain the people's buildings, and have some sort of a comprehensive plan which says this is our fleet of buildings. We have 800 or 900, whatever it is. Now we know where all of them are. We have a list. We know this one needs this much maintenance. This one needs this much maintenance. This one needs to be attended to maybe for winterization.

Somebody needs to start running the show. It seems like we are going from day to day spending money like crazy. Now we are facing the highest deficit we have ever had, we have the largest Budget that we ever had, and the oil money is all gone. That is the situation we are left in. It is no good for the Premier or the Minister of Finance to say: Well, everything is going to be just fine.

Well, I do not think so, not going in the direction we are going. We cannot pray to the god of oil and hope that everything works out. We have to start managing our own affairs. For sure, we can manage the expense side. If we cannot manage the expense side, we should not ask to be rehired in November.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great honour to speak anytime in this House. There is no doubt about it. I have been here twelve years. I know sometimes people outside look at this place and they see what is happening in here and sometimes it can be a bit rambunctious or whatnot, but I have certainly come to appreciate this particular House of Assembly that we sit in.

It is where the business of the people of the Province is done. It is where laws are

proclaimed. It is where laws are adjusted. It is where regulations are changed and all aimed at doing betterment for the people of the Province. There is no doubt about that. Whenever I get the opportunity to stand on my feet here, I appreciate that opportunity and recognize that when we look at other parts of the world – I was to a forum recently where one of the countries in the session commented they had 400 terrorist attacks on their schools in one year – in one year.

The thing that struck me is that these radical groups, in order to control their masses, one of the first places they hit are schools because they know that an educated population are the ones who can turn things around, who will question, who will challenge, and eventually make change. So it is a sad situation.

I know when we talk about our own education system in this House, there will always be challenges. We heard the question on the Autism Spectrum Disorder today. There are many other things. We need to continue to work towards those, but recognizing that where Canada is and where Newfoundland and Labrador is, we are in a good place compared to many of the jurisdictions who faced issues – just imagine having one of our children, one of our students sitting in the classroom and all of a sudden a terrorist attacks and destroys the school, or in the nighttime destroying the school. We have to put things in perspective, Mr. Speaker.

I was listening to the Member for St. Barbe – and it is not always that I will get up and revert to the things that we have done in the past and that kind of stuff but when a member gets up and he raises certain issues, I think the onus is on me to counter some of the commentaries that he has made. He talked on the discretionary spending.

Well, we went through a Budget exercise here just a while ago and as departments and as ministers, we looked at places where we could save – and here I am going to commend the bureaucrats because under the headings we have expenditures for Transportation and Communications, Supplies, Purchased Services, and all these kind of things, and we have to commend the people that work in our

departments because what they did is they recognized the challenge and they came forward with suggestions and then let's say they travel a little bit less. They spent a little bit less on supplies. They made honest efforts to assist in the situation that we find ourselves in.

He talked about the boundary changes. I do not know, maybe I am misinterpreting him, but he seems to be now questioning whether the boundary changes are the right things or not. It was referenced today by the Premier that the Leader of the Opposition is not sure. My take on his commentary today is that he seems to have changed his mind a little. I guess the thing is that we can stand here and listen and one thing about it is you cannot change your mind from day to day. I do believe he was a member that stood up and voted. He voted to support it and I am not quite certain but I guess we will see what tomorrow will bring and what the opinion is, and we will see what next week and the opinion is, and next month we will see what the opinion is.

He talked about Population Health and the spending in the wellness of our population as being money misplaced. Now I take exception to that statement. If you look at the phenomenon of people being overweight and the obesity rates, it is not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador, it is not unique to Canada, and generally, in North America we see the challenge. A lot of it comes from the different type of lifestyle that we now live.

There are people of my age who we have talked about it from time to time – and like I said, I do not want to go there too much, but when you were kids, dare I say, fifty years ago – now, everybody is looking at me; dare I say fifty years ago – it was certainly a different lifestyle. I can remember mom or dad singing out to you it is time to come in. Now we are battling with kids, it is time to go out.

They have become very much a sedentary lifestyle. The iPads, the phones, the TVs. Just look at anybody's home today. At one point you were lucky if you had one TV in your house, and people gathered around to watch it. I doubt if there are very many homes in this Province now with only one TV. The amazing thing that I noticed a little while ago – I went into a house where there were three people, three people

lived in this one house – I did not make commentary to the individuals there – and I counted seven televisions, seven TVs in a house where three people lived.

So it tells you the different type of lifestyle that we are leading. The kids today are not as active. So what do we do? It is not misplaced money, Mr. Speaker. Now, one thing that I will agree with the member on, he mentioned to change an attitude, to change a lifestyle, is not something that you are going to snap a program and it happens. Just look at the anti-smoking campaign. Look at where they have come in thirty years.

Think about anybody who went on a plane or elsewhere, you sat up and you smoked. One of the strangest things I have seen – and I tried to pull it out of the wall, but I could not do it – I went into this one particular place where a piece of furniture is still left. It was in the bathroom, I will say that. Right above the toilet paper roll was an ashtray. Now think about where you would see that today – absolutely not.

If you look at the people like Kevin Coady and those people are doing around smoking, man, we have made major gains – major, major gains now. Even your most prolific smokers, many of them now you see them pull off on the side of the road. They do not smoke in their vehicles. They purchase the vehicles; they will stop on the side of the road, get out, have their cigarette, and get back in.

If you think about that and think about the individual who, twenty years ago, driving down the road and said no, sorry, you cannot smoke in my car, but I will stop and let you out. That person would have been seen as a bit unusual. Today, even the most prolific smokers are people who will step outside.

If we look at some of the spending that we have put into recreation, we have the physical activity and the community investments, the recreation supports that we put \$1.5 million a year into. We have our community capital grants, and all MHAs would practically recognize them. They range from \$5,000 up to \$15,000 that people can avail of. Oftentimes, the good thing about those grants is that the people and the groups who come into the communities and put in

applications for those grants often have partners with them so that if they are given \$15,000, they may have raised \$20,000 or \$30,000, then you might get some corporate support for them and on from that.

The Seniors Community Recreation Grant, we put \$200,000 in programs that support provincial recreation sports strategies around provincial healthy aging policies and programs. I will say that I met this morning with the advisory committee on aging and seniors. Again, we talked about the challenges that are going to be facing our senior population – not only facing our senior population, Mr. Speaker, facing the children of those who are aging.

For example, in my family, my mother passed away just a couple of years ago, but there were ten children, ten of us, and we are lucky enough that eight of us still live in the Province. So we could provide for her and keep her in her home as long as we possibly could by all of us, brothers and sisters taking shifts; but, think about today, the family sizes are certainly not of eight, ten and twelve children, so the responsibility that is going to fall on one child or two children is huge and we are going to have to somehow find another way to address it.

Even in the provision of home care we are having difficulties. I know in rural parts of the Province, in areas of my district we are finding it a challenge – some people are – to get health care workers. Again, we keep supporting seniors to the tune that we can.

One of the programs as well we launched – and this speaks to what I was talking about before – Participation Nation Unplugged. If there is one thing that I have had some commentary about recently are the ad campaigns that are on TV. We have a group of kids who are playing or something, and the screen gets smaller, smaller, and smaller. It is interesting they put on the ad and the brochure that this is our website, please do not call us, or please do not contact us. Stay active, stay outside, and lead a healthier lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak on one thing as well that the Member for St. Barbe raised. He used again – and I have heard it said several times from people across the way, he uses the

word “wastage,” that this government has wasted money. He talks about our lack of spending in infrastructure. I have to take some exception to that because I came from the school system before I got into politics. There was an issue around our schools, around maintenance that needed to be done, extension upgrades that needed to be done, air quality issues, and construction of new schools.

Mr. Speaker, if I look at health care, ever more demanding. If you look at the investments in wait-lists – and he also mentioned that we failed in tourism. I have to again take exception. If we look at our TV ads for tourism, all we have to do is look at the number and the increase in the number of people who have travelled to our Province over the past number of years. We have to say that our investment in that field has been unsurpassed.

Secondly, I think at one point that we saw a quaint type of tourism establishments. Now what we have, I feel, in the Province are tourism establishments that are second to none anywhere in the world. People in rural parts of the Province who own bed and breakfasts take their quality of service very seriously. They are offering a service, like I said, second to none.

If I look to my district and speak to some of the initiatives that have come to my district since I came in 2003, I am telling you, the people in my district will not say that these projects were wasted funds. They will not. One of the first things that we did was to put in place a CT scan. A CT scan where they would often have to travel maybe to St. John’s most times to get that service. That was put in place.

Another thing that has happened down there is dialysis. If there was one piece of equipment or service that I feel that we need to do as much as we possibly can in the Province that is with that dialysis unit. Here is an example, I would have people – and many of us who are in from rural parts of the Province can attest to that. We would have people who were on dialysis who would travel three times a week. I would have people who would leave Burin, would travel to St. John’s and back three times a week to receive dialysis.

Now, to a normal, healthy person travelling to St. John’s and back in a day can be draining. Just think of someone who as a health problem, a kidney problem, a dialysis issue, who would travel to St. John’s and back three times a week. Just think of the drain that it does on the body. When I walk away from this political arena, that is one of the things that I will proudly say was one of the moments in politics that I was most proud of is that now we can provide twenty-four people a day up there on dialysis. It is something that will be a crowning moment.

Secondly, two things that have been announced in the Budget around the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: – adult protection units, around dementia. Second, a clinic what people will call in the northern part of our district. Down in the area where I live, Mr. Speaker, there is a clinic down there now that provides services. People have pushed a doctor service is lacking in a particular area, and I know because in working on this clinic, moving this clinic forward, I met with Eastern Health and they are finding it more and more difficult to recruit doctors. In particular case, what we had was a doctor who was travelling to clinic A, B, C and doing some other work.

What they did, in this particular case, the communities came together and said we will close out our smaller clinics and we will create one centralized clinic. They agreed as to where it would be and now a doctor visits there and the patients go to him.

There are ways that we can make inroads but it means that we, as politicians, have to bring some things to our constituents and say now is this a possibility. We work with Eastern Health, is this a possibility, and in the end we arrive at a solution.

I heard an interview today that talked about the size of the public service. It says that one in every five people in the Province work in the public service. So we have almost 20 per cent of our population, including children and adults, who work in the public service.

The other commentary was that per capita, Newfoundland and Labrador has more public servants than any other jurisdiction in Canada. Now I am assuming – I will not take it at face value, but the reporter, that is what they said. There are a couple ways to do it, and I know we have thrown shots across. Members opposite have said: We are going to cut, we are just not sure where yet.

The Minister of Finance, and we as a government, decided here is the way we will tackle the size of the public service. We want it to be more efficient. We want more use of technology. So rather than massive layoffs, how we have decided to do it is through attrition. Each of our departments has identified a number through attrition, and as retirements take place, we will not refill all of those positions. Making sure core front line services are still in effect so that the people of the Province get served more equitably.

Now I know the Minister of Transportation and Work, we have been looking at something down our way for a while, just as an example of a means of efficiency. We are looking at a piece of equipment that simply will print out licences; whereas before, I think the people down my way would have to travel to Clarendville or St. John's. If somebody offers that service in St. John's, we travel to them. Well, maybe what we can do is identify a piece of technology that once you pay your fee, that piece of technology will spit that document out. It is a cost-saving measure, but it is also a way to do it more efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, it is amazing. I had four piles. Everything from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to more seniors' issues, the OrgCode report around homelessness, but my twenty minutes is down to forty-one seconds now.

Mr. Speaker, I will close by saying this, the final word. The one thing I will say to the Member for St. Barbe is that the people in my district who have seen investments will not use the word that it was wasted money. There was no spending that went on in my district that was not required. I can tell you that I am not someone who is going to spend frivolously. It is something that was needed in the area. We worked with our constituents to make sure

things were done, and, Mr. Speaker, my last word, it is not wastage.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for an opportunity once again to rise in this hon. House to speak on Budget 2015.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I stand here very proudly today to represent the constituents of my District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace, and it is a privilege for me to do so.

I want to touch on a few issues that are taking place in my district, and if it sounds like I am being repetitive, it is because I am being repetitive, for the simple fact that things did not get done. Of course, when you are up here on your feet and you talk about the Budget, you sit here and you wonder the reason why it did not get done.

So, Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would like to say is the mayor and councillors in the Town of Victoria, many mayors in the past, and right up until this point in time, mayors and councillors in Victoria have worked very hard on behalf of their community to bring it forward. Of course, as you well know, we all need infrastructure in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, it is said around circles that the federal government is the first level of government. Then it comes down to the Province, which is the second level of government, and then of course it comes down to municipalities. I think a little bit different than that.

In my past life as the Mayor of Carbonear, my thought was the federal government downloads on the provincial government. The provincial government downloads on the municipalities. Of course, the municipalities have no other choice but to download on its residents. So from my point of view, the first level of government is municipalities. Of course, as you know, they are the front line workers because those ladies

and gentlemen are always there and it is very easy for people to approach and get at them from the front line. So I just wanted to pass that along to you.

Like I just spoke about Victoria, these folks work very hard in their communities. They love to see their communities build. By the way, Victoria is one of those communities that is growing. It is coming along very nicely. Of course, as I just said, all those communities that I am going to refer to here today all need infrastructure. As they grow, they will look at government to make sure government is there onboard with them and all the time looking for infrastructure.

What I found over the years as it pertained to infrastructure, you applied for the funding and then, of course, usually early in the spring of the year Municipal Affairs comes out with what is passed and what is not. Anyway, that is not done up to this point in time here right now. It was always a problem for me, as the Mayor of Carbonear, for the simple fact that you applied for it, it would go before the Department of Municipal Affairs, then it would come back, and then you had to go out and get the work done on the project.

By time it went back to the minister's office and sat on his desk for five or six weeks, all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, you are up late in the fall of the year. It is not a time certainly to be laying water and sewer lines in the ground because it is too cold. So that gets postponed to another year. Then when you come back to the House and ask them for the projects for the following year, oh, no, no, hold on here a second. You cannot do that now, because that project is not completed yet. That is a problem. That is a serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, when I was mayor, I remember coming to St. John's and sitting with –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. SLADE: – the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and they were trying to do things better. At that point in time we were told, we are going

to get it out through the door quicker. There is going to be less red tape.

Mr. Speaker, the plan they came up with was worse than the one we had before. It was more red tape, it was far worse. I just wanted to say that. I take note, and I am very glad to say this – but, Mr. Speaker, the job is not done. I do not want you to ever think the job is done, because we saw it last year.

I am going to talk about the lines over by the TC Square. I have to commend the minister. I would like to commend the Minister of the Department of Transportation, at least right now the dots are put on the road and the directional arrows. They are only sprayed on with a spray gun, but anyway that is a start. I would hope to think it will not be there like that until the end of October, I say to the minister. I do indeed hope the Minister of Transportation takes care of that issue over there. It is a very treacherous place.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to sit in this place, and I am sure the minister does not want to sit in his place while we increase the risk of an accident and possibly a fatality. Again, the Town of Carbonear is no different than any other community. The mayor and councillors out there have done great work for the Town of Carbonear, and I certainly commend all of those folks.

Mr. Speaker, I have a concern in Bristol's Hope. Bristol's Hope cannot be a local service district. We are after being in to meet with the minister on that. They are not inviting anyone else to create local service districts. I believe the last one that was done was in 2010.

I have a concern about the people in Bristol's Hope. The people in Bristol's Hope right now because they are not a local service district – they have folk in place that looks after the community. They let the community know what this group is doing in the community, but I will tell you the problem I have with that area there – guess what? Those guys are not eligible for any funding that the government puts out. Now, they are taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador. They deserve the same recognition, we say, as other communities.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, we are going to have to do something here that gives them either special recognition or something because they cannot apply for it. They are down there now trying to patch together a bit of money so they can put a playground down there for the kids. They are not eligible for a recreation grant. That is not fair, that is not right, and that should not be like that.

The Town of Harbour Grace – and I am going to say this, Mr. Speaker, you travelled into Harbour Grace the other night. What did you think of the road from Riverhead down to where you were to the other night, Mr. Speaker? That road is gone. I tell you something, in my grandfather's day, he would say this: My God, that road was that bad you would not put a horse and cart on it. That is the truth; you would not put a horse and cart on it.

That road needs attention. This government has a responsibility to make sure that road is done. The Town of Harbour Grace have been pushing for that, and that was supposed to be done two years ago. It is simply not good enough. You come into a community like that – and I will tell you something. We talk about our tourism. My God if a tourist ever goes down over that, they would turn around and go back to St. John's as quick as they can. They would say my God, we are after coming to a third world country or something.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply not good enough. I say to the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Speaker, through you, please, Sir, have a look at this, get this corrected. A wonderful fellow I know you are and I am sure you will have a look at it. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in Riverhead I have two problems; one is in Bryants Cove and one is in Riverhead. Now the Department of Transportation when they take the time to do a road or anything, I am always hoping that it is engineered or something. In Riverhead there are six houses on the right-hand side going up through Riverhead. The Department of Transportation took the time to go up there and put a bit of asphalt on it, which was appreciated, by the way, Mr. Minister, by the people in Riverhead, but the drain is on the high side of it and the road is elevated opposite. You have six homes down

there now with a simple rainfall that are flooding out.

When you go to the Department of Transportation – when you contact the Bay Roberts area in the Department of Transportation the first thing they say is we are not responsible. These people did not have that water before I say, Mr. Speaker. It is not good enough. Whether it is the Department of Transportation going back there or whatever to put in some curb to pick up this water to put it into the drainage system on the other side of the road, that is what needs to be done. That is what should be done. That is right by the people of Riverhead and it should be right by this government. It should be righted by this government because you were the ones who did it. We talk about all the good things you did – there are certainly things that you did.

I have a gentleman in Bryants Cove, Mr. Speaker, there was a culvert put across the road up there. He is down behind the town council office there and the culvert was put across last year. When the ground is frozen of course the water is coming out through this here and it is travelling over the top of the ground. Guys, the man's property down there, he put up a brand new garage there, it is destroyed by the water that is coming from this culvert. Again, it is simply, simply not good enough.

Mr. Speaker, the Town of Spaniard's Bay of course is also a growing community. Here in this hon. House we have a duty and a responsibility to the people. I am going to tell you something, it is not often you hear this said here, it is really not – guys, we are here to represent people. It is about the people of our districts. It is about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We should be doing better by them.

Mr. Speaker, on that note there, we talk about the government and our seniors because our seniors are very important to us. These are the people who brought us where we are today. They have had much, much to do about that. They have paid their dues to society and these are the people who brought us where we are today. I hear it said here now, Mr. Speaker, all the time, well, I mean, it is on the computer. You can pull it off the computer. I would just

like for people to understand, these seniors they recognize things there that you and I probably would not recognize right away, but they are right.

We are living in a computer world. Not every senior citizen out there got a computer. Not every senior citizen out there knows how to use a computer. Mr. Speaker, the people who we talk about in here every day, morning, noon and night, are the people who we are leaving behind. They are the ones who are less informed because the only way we can do it – I heard it said there about the Budget. They are not going to send out the glossies in the mail this year, the details of the Budget. Mr. Speaker, these people expected that. That is the only way they are going to get informed. I do not understand, and I do not think government understands that part of it. Anyway, that is very important.

Just to flick back to another community in my district, as it stands today anyway – somebody is going to deal with it in the near future I am sure – that is Point Road in Bryants Cove. Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you have ever had a chance to drive out over it. I certainly have. It is in terrible condition. Like I said, if it had to be tack coated last year, you guys over there – the guys and the gals over here they could have probably saved Point Road, but after this winter there is no saving it. You know that and I know it.

What was ironic about it is – just get a load of this now, guys. I am just going to tell you something. Government recognized how bad it was. Government plows that road up there from what I can understand. I think they do it through the council or whatever, or the council pays them to do it or whatever – I am not 100 per cent on that – but get a load of this. I will tell you how bad it is. School buses do not want to go out over it anymore. It is about the safety of the kids on the bus. They do not want to go out over it any more.

Mr. Speaker, it is kind of ironic. The Department of Transportation gave the town council in Bryants Cove sixty bags of wet patch. Mr. Speaker, you would want sixty bags of wet patch to go into the first ten feet of it. Just imagine when a government recognizes – do you know the reason why they gave it to them? The

road is that bad that the equipment that was going out over it was getting beat up. It is absolutely amazing when you sit down and think about it. My God, where are we after going? In the name of God, where are we after going?

Now, Mr. Speaker, this next issue I am going to bring up is indeed an emergency. I have brought it here in a petition. We know there are 150 boil orders across Newfoundland and Labrador. We know that.

The local service district in Freshwater has been in contact with the minister's people, and I want to talk about the arsenic in the well down there. Now, there is a piece of equipment we can purchase that can take care of the arsenic in that well. We do not need people sick in these communities. There are eighteen families on that well. Eighteen families is what is on the well. That is the count. I got that directly from the chair down in Freshwater.

Mr. Speaker, at what point in time do we say to the people of Freshwater, pay your 10 per cent – which they have – and let's see if we can correct this problem? Guys, you have to pay attention to what I am saying here. We have people in Freshwater who are in a lot of trouble with their water system, and we need to do something about it. Not next year, not six months' time, not two months' time, we need to do it right now. That is what we need to do.

We need to make sure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, not only Freshwater, but the people in Newfoundland and Labrador have decent drinking water. That is a God-given right. We need to do it. We need to address that issue. I am just hoping the Minister of Municipal Affairs over there now, I am just hoping he is listening to what I am saying, and I hope he does something for the great people in the community of Freshwater. Now, that is what I am hoping he is doing, that is what I am hoping he is going to do. I do not see too much response over there, so it kind of worries me a little bit.

I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker. I will be on my feet here again, you can rest assured, about the people in Freshwater. These people need a little bit of protection and a little bit of support from this government. That is enough

of that foolishness. I am after bringing that issue here many times in petition, and it is simply, simply not good enough.

We talk about the government and all they do and all they – well, you know, we are fine fellows, and they pat themselves on the back, Mr. Speaker. In some regard, yes, they are, but when you talk about arsenic in people's wells and the survival of a community, and you are not out there supporting it, it is simply not good enough. It is not good enough.

I am going to tell you something, this government has to go out to the electorate now, and I am going to tell you something right now, they better be very, very careful. I will tell you something right now, there is no good for them to go down to Freshwater. They can forget Freshwater, it is no good for them to go down there. These people have been ignored down there for so long.

I am going to tell you, the mentality over there is, well, you have the long-term health care facility. I take notice that the – I am not even sure which minister it is. They change over there that often, Mr. Speaker, I am not even sure what minister it is any more. Minister Dalley, I take notice he is over there now and –

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member to withdraw; you are not allowed to name members.

MR. SLADE: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

Anyway, I will not go there now, Mr. Speaker. I changed my mind. I will not go there.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you something. It is not funny. I can assure those guys over there, they are going to be tried and tested, I am going to tell you that, Mr. Speaker, because some of the things going on in this Province may seem simple, and in a lot of cases they are simple. I will say this, Mr. Speaker, for me, for this group over here that I stand behind, it is about the people. It always has to be about the people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SLADE: It has to be about the people, because all we do here, we are only going to give the people – here is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, we are only servants of the people. That is all we are in this House, servants to the people. When we turn our backs on people, we will certainly know it.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I am just going to clue up here now. I do not have much time left here. I will just say this, when we come in here and we become so complacent and it is about ourselves, we should not wait for an election. We should walk through the door, Mr. Speaker, and never look back, because we failed the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed an honour again to be able to stand and speak to the Budget as we wind down to the last number of hours around a great debate about a Budget that was presented a number of weeks ago, that presented based on a balanced approach to addressing the needs of the people here.

Mr. Speaker, as I begin, I want to acknowledge – the hon. Member for St. Barbe had spoken, and while I respect the man, he frightened me. He frightened me to stay in this building because I thought this was going to collapse around us. He frightened me to go in any other government building because I feel they are going to collapse and it is not safe to be in there. I am afraid to go outside in the parking lot because I do not know if I will fall in a crater or something will happen out there. I am terrified.

When I look at the \$10 billion we have invested, Mr. Speaker, in infrastructure – and people say they do not know where it went. Well, I explained the last time – and I do not want to get into that same approach of where a lot of money

went in different districts, but I will get back to that later on.

I must acknowledge, to the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, he had me when he called me honourable and doing a great job. He had me, but then he took the road the hon. Member for St. Barbe took. He went down that slippery slope, Mr. Speaker, where it is all negative, it is all falling apart, and it is all doom and gloom. There is nothing good out there. Citizens have nothing to look forward to. We have not moved forward. There is no reason to take pride in this great Province of ours.

There is no reason to believe we offer quality education and quality health care; that we look at safety as paramount. That the 1,700 staff who work for the Department of Transportation and Works and the 46,000 civil servants do due diligence every day, take pride in their work, and make sure that people are serviced the way they should be. The thousands of partnerships we have with the private sector out there and the not-for-profit sector, how valuable they are to supplying services and providing those properly needed supports in this Province.

I am frightened to death, totally terrified at the end of the day. I am almost thinking that I wasted thirty years working in the civil service, working to try to benefit people's lives, working with other people who have done some great work in this Province, being mentored by hundreds of those and figuring we have done some good, but apparently not. If you listen to the members on the other side, apparently it was all for not. It was a waste of our time. It was a waste of the civil service time. It was a waste of our investments, Mr. Speaker.

Nothing has worked. We have done everything wrong. It is time for us to give up, pass over the keys. Mr. Speaker, I guarantee you the keys will not be passed over on my watch, or this Premier's watch, or this side of the House's watch to the members over there, because there is too much doom and gloom.

If you want to see the exodus we had in the 1980s and 1990s, Mr. Speaker. They will be taking buses, ferries, and planes as quick as they can get out of here, if it is turned over to members like that with the doom and gloom. It

is not going to happen here – not going to happen.

Let's just talk about a lot of the good things that are going on here, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about all the good things we have done. Let's talk about the civil service, very diligent, very highly professional, very well trained, and a very engaged group of supportive citizens. That is what they are. They are not just employees of this government. They are the same citizens who travel our roads, our volunteers who are engaged out there. They are the ones who set the policies.

We get to pass the legislation. It all gets voted on. Everybody in this House gets an opportunity to vote on that based on what those civil servants have seen, the dialogue they have had with the general public, and the partnerships they have developed. They develop that dialogue. They set the policy. They move it up through the ranks so that it is something we can present because it represents the needs and it is the best return on our investments, Mr. Speaker. That is what we continue to do. That is what this Administration has done for the last twelve years. We have every intention of continuing doing that after this fall.

I also want to touch around some of the things – and I know the emphasis has been around TW, no doubt some challenges coming off a winter season, 10,000 kilometres of roads, some challenging areas, Mother Nature. The only group that I would not take on, I would rather try to partner with her. Mother Nature can be very forgiving also. You just have to get her in the right mood, get her to support what we are doing, and get her to work with us. We do that, we know, we have learned from that, Mr. Speaker. We have learned our harsh environment.

Let me tell you what we have done to partner with Mother Nature. We have done our winter maintenance schools where we bring in professionals who know about the weather conditions, how they change, know about the flow of rivers, know about how snow is formed

–

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – and our wind, and our tides, worked around that so our staff are qualified, they are trained, and we better can approach how we deal with the challenges of Mother Nature. That is what we do here. We plan. We open up dialogue exactly with the right people and we address that.

Are there needs of all kinds in the Province when it comes to road conditions? Sure there are. That is why over \$100 million will be going out the doors over the next number of months to very qualified contractors out there from the tip of Labrador to Conception Bay centre, around all of those.

The hon. member talked about it; he knows there are roads out there now in the midst of being repaired. Our summer maintenance program is rolling out as we speak. Hundreds of our employees are out there now. You can see them on the roads, doing their maintenance work, putting things in place to make sure people travel safely, putting up signs so they can get prepared to do the proper scoping on exactly what needs to be done then preparing to do that. We have our contractors out there, contracts going out, and new contracts going out again today in all the districts around this Province, Mr. Speaker. We continue to do that.

Our first process here is to assess. All our crews are back. They are all trained. All of our managers, we went to talk again about it being assessed, how we can deal with the challenges in this Province. We had all of our senior managers and our supervisors in to talk about how they can better do scheduling, how they can better mobilize crews in various areas to ensure things are done better and there is a better economy of scale, that what we get back from our investments is much more than we have in the past because we have to make an ability, or find an ability to get more out of what we are spending, Mr. Speaker. We are going to do that, and we are going to do that with the help of the people who are trained to do that.

The hon. member talked about engineers. Well, our engineers are second to none, Mr. Speaker. They have spent their formative years, they have been trained, they have done their work terms,

they have their experience, they know about the flows of water, they know about site lines, they know about challenges on hills, they know about slopes. So when they get criticized, there is another challenge there, and it is Mother Nature. What happens one year compared to the next year is totally different, but we are finding better ways to address that and make that work.

Let's talk about some of the things they say we have not done. We have 1,300 bridges. We have addressed over 100 bridges only in the last couple of years, either replaced or did repairs. This year alone, we are now looking at another twenty bridges that we are going to repair or replace. We continue to do that.

We have engineers, as the hon. member talked about, qualified trained people who go out and inspect them. Every two years every one of our bridges is inspected. If there are some challenges, they are inspected even more often than not. They are looked at. If there are any immediate things that need to be repaired, they are immediately repaired or they are shut down and an alternative is done until those repairs are made, Mr. Speaker.

We constantly want to ensure that people are safe, and that is what we do. We have made some major announcements about major thoroughfare bridges, particularly around the Bond Bridge, Mr. Speaker, where we are about to move very –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: The contract is ready to be done, ready to go. The contractor will be on site in only the next couple of weeks to move that forward, Mr. Speaker. A great link for people right across this Province, and in a great district I might add also.

Let's talk about some of the other things that we are responsible for here. Apparently the things that we do not do, things that do not get done. Talk about twenty-one airstrips, eight on the Island and thirteen in Labrador that we maintain. In some of the harshest weather in the world, we manage to maintain them. Thousands of landings and takeoffs every year –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Tens of thousands, Mr. Speaker, we manage to do that in a safe manner. We work with the proponents, we work with the contractors, we work with agencies who are bringing in freight, passengers who are flying in. We work with our professionals who have to get into these remote areas to provide services to the people, be it medical attention, be it social services, be it employment initiatives, whatever services, be it education. We provide those services and they are provided because the people of this Province and the civil servants and particularly those at TW ensure and they work in some of the most adverse conditions.

When it is ninety-five kilometre winds and it is forty centimetres of snow, Mr. Speaker, they are ones who are out there. They are the ones who are putting their lives sometimes at risk to make sure that we are safe when we travel and that people can get to and from where they need to get to, particularly when it comes around being open for health care and being able to have that access for emergencies.

We have seven aircrafts, air ambulances, fire suppression, two air ambulances, five water bombers, all very important to ensure safety in this Province and also building our economy. Our forest industry is very valuable to the people of this Province. We want to ensure that if there is an issue that it can be dealt with before it causes a financial burden for people; but, particularly around safety, if there are forest fires in certain areas or if there are issues around that need to be addressed immediately we have state-of-the art, five top-of-the-line water bombers at a value of almost \$250 million. There is where the money is gone, Mr. Speaker, money invested back for the people particularly around safety.

TW is particularly around that, it is about safety first, the optics second, and that is what it is all about – safety is the primary objective here. Our buildings – is there a lot of work to do on a number of them? Sure, we have almost 2,000 buildings that we are responsible for, Mr. Speaker. We maintain those buildings in a safe manner. Would we like to have more money to be able to do them aesthetically, continuously changing things, updating, and all that? Sure,

we would, but then we would be challenged about making sure that we have better equipment on our roads, ensuring that we make sure that our airstrips are comparable for the landings of new aircraft that are being built. Ferries – making sure our docks and that are ready for our ferries so that we can improve our transportation services for the people of this Province. That is exactly what we have.

Talk about the eighteen ferries, Mr. Speaker, that we have valued at a billion dollars; a billion-dollar investment there that we spend nearly \$100 million a year maintaining and running. There is the investment for the people. While on the economy of scale for the number of people it serves it may not be the same as if you offered service in a bigger urban centre, but it is very important to the people in remote isolated areas, particularly on those Island areas. They do deserve access to transportation, and they do have the ability to have a reliable, affordable service. That is what we provide.

We get criticized on the other side when one little thing goes wrong. Nobody talks about the 99.9 things that go right because of how the staff do it, the services we have in place, the equipment, how we upgraded, and how we immediately address when there is a challenge. We asked people to tell us about those challenges because we have, as our foremost objective, to improve things, to provide better services, to make sure that people have access to the proper services. That is what we do, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about 872 buildings that we now have people in on a daily basis that we own and maintain; billions of dollars' worth of assets there, Mr. Speaker, billions that we have accumulated over the years by all Administrations. Over the last twelve years think of what we have improved on, think of the buildings we have built. I have already outlined the new schools and that and I will not go through that again. We know where that is up in the \$500 million, \$600 million value, probably closer to a billion dollars just in that alone, but all the other ones that we renovated.

Let's get away from the education institutions. We have already acknowledged the fact we are sold on it. It is one of our big priorities. We

have invested in that to make sure people have accessible education. It is safe, it is engaging, and it is a healthy environment for them to learn. We have done that. Accolades – we have been acknowledged by national and international what we have done. We are going to continue to do that. Is there more to do? Of course there is.

Our other buildings where our civil servants work in or where our citizens go to get the services, Mr. Speaker, we have made them engaging. We have made them accessible. We tried to make sure that they are in areas where there is less travel on people if we have a suburb and area where it is a catchment area for people so that people can come and get the services. We tried to bundle services so that people are not having to go to four or five different buildings. We are trying to do that, Mr. Speaker.

In some cases we spend money in leases, a very valuable way. We look at the economy of scale, what is a better investment for the people if it is only a small service we need, or we only have a small number of civil servants we need to house, isn't it better to lease those properties in an area? That then is a reinvestment back into the economy, because those are taxpayers who own those buildings. That also might provide an opportunity for that landlord to ensure that other services are offered.

In some cases you can note where we lease opportunities. There are not-for-profits who also have services there. We gather certain clients who are looking for services. So we have an all-encompassing process there, Mr. Speaker. We are very diligent in how we do that. It is planned. The Premier has always talked about the strategies we have, the plans we have, the five-year processes here. So people know where we are going. We can plan that. That is what we do, and we do it very diligently.

Mr. Speaker, we have 300 leases. We talked about that. We want to ensure our investment is the better service for the people of this Province, and we do that. We do it through private companies. We do it from multinationals. We do it from individuals in certain communities. We want to ensure, where possible, we can offer services to people in that community, but we do not want to have a big building.

We will get criticized for: why don't we build more buildings? You are paying x-number of millions of dollars in leases. Because the investment and the return on that, Mr. Speaker, is not to the best interest of the people of this Province. We want to make sure we work with the business community out there to provide a service that our taxpayers can afford, but more particularly that they can avail of.

Let's talk about the different things in my department, and very unique, the different branches we have. It was a bit surprising to me when I came in realizing that the mailroom is part and parcel of what we are responsible for. Also the air ambulance, making sure they are fitted out and are ready to go. That they have a place where maintenance can be done on them, from our water bombers to everything else that you would think are related to transportation, and we have done that, to leases on all of our buildings, the hundreds of leases we have.

It is a very open-minded, very complex department, but with a simple theme. The simple theme is to be able to offer people proper services in a safe manner. I have to give credit to our staff. We do that very diligently, Mr. Speaker, and we do it with the best thought of the people who are being serviced.

Are there challenges? Of course there are. There is no doubt, when we are dealing with some of our buildings, nearly eighty or ninety years old in certain areas. We are trying to see, how do we maintain those? How do we bring them up to standard, or how do we offer better service for people?

Sometimes we are criticized about the blue zone parking. We have gone ahead light years in the last number of years, particularly around our provincial buildings, of ensuring people have proper access, those who have mobility challenges. Ensuring that people should be – and this is not a necessity. This is a right to have access to those buildings, Mr. Speaker. We spent millions, because it is the right thing to do and we have a responsibility to do that.

Look around. Look at the Citizens' Rep's recent report. He outlines only a couple of nuances there where we need to improve on. I have ensured that our staff are working on that

immediately, and we are making changes on a daily basis to ensure – if there are areas here where the blue zones are not being adhered to, we want to ensure we do that here. We work very closely with the Minister Responsible for Service NL to ensure that works out there in the private sector also.

We have taken a role and a responsibility here to ensure that the people of this Province get what they pay for, Mr. Speaker. Do you know what they get? They get the proper services. They get an opportunity to tell us how we better improve it. Do they get the best of the world? Mr. Speaker, we would love to be able to do that, but we need to have a balanced approach here and we have been doing that as an Administration.

Particularly this Budget, Mr. Speaker, talks to a balanced approach when you have to be fiscally responsible. You want to get over that hurdle. You want to get over that hump. You want to make sure you get to the other side of the road so that on the other side you are ready to open up again, offer more services, improve on what we already have, but to get there you have to make sure you maintain what you have. There is an expectation, but there is a right of people to have services, and we have done that.

One of the key things we did, we did not cut any core funding to the not-for-profits that we support, because they are too valuable to us. The services they offer, the partnerships they have with us, what they offer to our ability to redesign policies. More importantly, in some cases it is to identify that we have dealt with a situation and now we can move on to something else that is a challenge and reinvest the money there and find another partnership to make things work as part of that process.

We have looked very closely at exactly what it is we need to be doing in this Province for the people, Mr. Speaker. We have talked about, we have done it on a balance, but we have done it on a balance in a number of cases. We did it because we just did not focus in one area. While education, health care, and infrastructure are all very important, we have done it – I suspect there is no program or no process or no group that we have not developed, partnered with, or offered services to address their needs.

Now, it may not be the perfect process. It may not be the perfect investment, but I can guarantee you we have gone out of our way to ensure that through dialogue and through partnerships, those issues are being addressed. If there is more we need to do, that is what we are doing. We are trying to find ways to do that and improve on it.

If there are things we have already done that we think have completed the challenge, we will take those resources and move them somewhere else where there are additional challenges, and I think we have done a great job of that. We have done a great job because of the dialogue between our civil servants and the partnerships we have developed.

This Premier here has opened up that dialogue. He has made the doors open: come on in, tell us what your challenges are and we will work with you. We will tell you what we can do. You tell us what we can do better, and we will make sure we do that. That is how we have moved those forward, Mr. Speaker.

We have come a long way in the last number of years around how we improve people's lifestyles; but, again, that is particularly around our infrastructure. You cannot base programs and services unless you have the proper infrastructure to address those, to engage those, to be able to offer them. So we have invested, we have invested a lot of money upfront. It may not be directly as much into some programs that people like, but it is there now.

Now we have the ability. As you noted, the five-year plan on infrastructure, where we will be in five years, now we have the ability. Through the Minister of Finance, the Premier, and this Administration, we will carve out exactly what programs and services we can better support, we can partner with, and that we can move to the next level.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about addressing issues. This is about eliminating issues, challenges that people have. Other Administrations talk about, well, we can deal with this. We do not want to deal with that stuff, we want to eliminate it. There are too many good things going on here. We would rather eliminate the struggles that people have, challenges they have, or things and

services they cannot get, so at the end of the day they are good. They become the next part of the citizens who we partner with to address the next issue that somebody else may have. That is how we work this out.

Mr. Speaker, as my time winds down, I want to reiterate at the end what I started at the beginning. The sky is not falling, as it has been noted by the members opposite. There is light at the end of the tunnel. There is a bright light out there. This bright light is there because this Administration and this Premier has opened up an opportunity for everybody to be engaged here, for everybody to have a say –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: – for us to improve people's lives in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have asked questions in the House this week and last week as well on the issue of homelessness and the amount of rental subsidy provided to those on Income Support. This gives me a little bit of opportunity to elaborate on that issue somewhat. I am going to take the opportunity to do that.

When we talk about the amount of rent that is provided to those on Income Support, we know the maximum family allowance is \$522. That is the maximum amount. It does not matter how large your family is, that is the maximum amount of rent that is provided as a rent supplement through Income Support.

A single individual is \$299, Mr. Speaker. That is whether you are single, adult under thirty, employable or non-employable, or a single adult over thirty, or a couple without children – sorry, the couple without children gets \$372. There is another \$150 that can be added to that. It is discretionary. It is the choice I guess of the

intake worker or the supervisor at the office of Social Services.

When you look at \$299 as the amount that an individual can receive, or \$522 is the maximum amount a family can receive as rental allowance, this is the concern that I have raised. If you do not have an address, you do not qualify for Income Support. You can go to a shelter – and I am going to talk a little bit about that as well – but, if you do not have an address you do not qualify for Income Support. If you cannot afford to pay your rent, it is pretty hard to have an address. So anybody who is receiving \$299 a month as rental allowance, if they cannot afford to pay their rent, then they do not have an address. Without the address, they do not get Income Support. Without Income Support, you are homeless. That is the reality of that particular situation.

Under the Poverty Reduction Strategy government has been saying that the number of people on the caseload for Income Support has dropped, and so it has. There has been some good things happening under the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Although I believe over the last three or four years or so that the Poverty Reduction Strategy has showing less signs of success than it did in the first four or five years that it was there.

We know that if somebody is homeless, the cost of somebody going into a shelter per day is \$703. We know that – and I am getting this from the OrgCode Consulting report that was done for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. These are the statistics that OrgCode has provided to government, has provided to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. The cost per day in a shelter is \$703. For hospitalization – if somebody finds themselves malnourished or whatever, the cost of hospitalization is \$1,564 a day. The cost of detox, \$257; psychiatric in-patient is \$1,898; addiction treatment is \$72; police detention is \$261; or prison is \$311 per day.

When you look at those costs and weigh it out against the fact that a single individual is getting \$299 a month to pay their rent, it does not take long to figure out that there may be cases – and in fact there are, because it is identified in the report – where it is actually cheaper to give

somebody a higher rental supplement than to have them stay in a shelter.

If we know – and we understand because the statistics are there that a shelter is \$703 a day. So if you put somebody in a shelter for five or six days, it does not take long to figure out that it is actually less expensive for government to pay more than \$299 and allow that individual to be housed. Because if they are not housed and they are homeless, they are probably going to a shelter, and it is costing the taxpayers, it is costing government more money to deal with them in a shelter or to deal with them in a psychiatric unit or to deal with them in prison because they were caught shoplifting or break and enter because they do not have any other source of income. So, the statistics here, according to the OrgCode Consulting report, speak for themselves.

We do know that – and I am quoting from the OrgCode Consulting report – “At present, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador invests approximately \$15.3 million annually in response to homelessness, however, 58% of this investment is dedicated to the provision of emergency shelter options.” So almost 60 per cent of the \$15.3 million is emergency shelter. So if we were able to be proactive in providing housing for people, as opposed to reactive and providing shelters, I am guessing – and it is more than just guessing, again, because it is here in the OrgCode Consulting report, that government could save a lot of money.

It says, “With limited resources available, a system primarily focused on managing homelessness” – which is what is happening, because the population of those who are homeless, who find themselves without an address, while the number of people on the caseload for Income Support has dropped dramatically, according to government – and there has been a drop; we all recognize that. I do not know if you would say it has dropped dramatically, but it is a significant improvement in the number of caseloads. On the other side of that, the ugly side of that statistic is that the number of people who are homeless has increased dramatically. In fact, it has doubled every two years over the past six or eight years. Every two years, the number of homeless people

in this Province has doubled. That is a concern; it is a huge concern to me.

I know in my district you can see people sleeping under bridges, you can see people sleeping in alleyways, you can see people sleeping in parking garages. I am not satisfied with the statistic that social services recipients are dropping if you weigh that against the fact that homeless statistics are increasing by leaps and bounds. That is not a statistic that government brags about, because it is not a statistic that they should be proud of.

So it says, “With limited resources available, a system primarily focused on managing homelessness through investment in emergency support provision will not end homelessness.” That, my friends, is a fact. Responding to homelessness will not end homelessness. Providing emergency shelters will not end homelessness.

If we in this Province are going to get serious about this issue, if we are truly going to focus on this issue, we need to be proactive and we need to look at a housing first strategy. If we were to be proactive as opposed to reactive when it comes to homelessness, we would reduce the numbers of people who are homeless; my guess is reducing it by half every two years as opposed to doubling it every two years, with a focus on the elimination – ending homelessness in this Province. That is what we should be focused on. Not focused on emergency response, we should be focused on housing first.

“Obviously, a realignment of resources will be needed to increase focus on housing with supports and decrease the need for long-term shelter stays.” That is right in the report. So that is the basis of the questions that I have been asking. Three days in a row I believe I have asked – or three different Question Periods I have asked questions of the minister on these statistics on the fact that the rate of homelessness in this Province has doubled every two years over the past six or eight years.

“When investigating the current cost of homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is also helpful to create costing estimates using the average interaction with health and correctional services of residents who are

experiencing homelessness ...” Now I have outlined the cost of these services, emergency shelters, or incarceration for an individual who finds themselves homeless and commits crimes to feed themselves, or whatever the case may be. We have looked at the cost of those shelters, or detox, or incarceration for those who are homeless and it is staggering. Those costs per day, a cost to the taxpayer of this Province – those costs are staggering.

“... the annual total cost of homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador is \$26 Million ...” Mr. Speaker, \$26 million a year to deal with homelessness. I am going to point out that I believe it is much higher than that and I will tell you why, because these statistics look at the years 2003 to 2009. It is now 2015. If the statistics are showing that the number of people who are homeless in Newfoundland and Labrador has doubled every two years over the past six or eight years – and this is a 2009 statistic, the \$26 million annually is the cost of homelessness to this Province, then it is considerably higher than that today – considerably higher.

They say that it is approximately \$15,400 per person. That is the cost of homelessness: \$15,400 per person annually in Newfoundland and Labrador. Now if you divide \$15,400 by twelve, it works out to a whole lot more than \$299 a month rental allowance – a whole lot more. If we were truly to get serious about ending homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador, very quickly government would realize that \$299 a month for a rental allowance on Income Support is creating homelessness not correcting it; and that \$299 a month for rental allowance for those on Income Support is considerably less than the \$1,200 or \$1,300 that it costs per individual annually because they are homeless.

It says for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness – that is individuals who are either in a psychiatric ward, individuals who are incarcerated, individuals using drug rehabilitation from time to time, whatever the case may be – estimate cost is approximately \$45,000 per person per year. Is the answer reacting to homelessness? It is not. Is the answer emergency shelters? Now, emergency shelters are needed, and nobody on this side is

saying to do away with emergency shelters – definitely not, but are we better off providing rental allowances higher than \$299 per month and reducing homelessness? Will that be more cost effective for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador? Will it be more cost effective for the taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador? Absolutely.

That is one way, Mr. Speaker, I think that the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, that our caucus are more prepared to govern. Because we will make the right decisions and we will make smart decisions that actually help the people, as opposed to reactionary. We think that housing first, that finding housing and providing housing, and providing the proper rental allowance so that those people who need it can find housing, as opposed to finding a pillow to put under their head at an emergency shelter night after night is far more cost effective for the people of this Province and for government.

Mr. Speaker, the OrgCode report, again, that was done for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, provided to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, should be used as a guide to help end homelessness. They say the total cost of reacting to homelessness is \$26 million a year in this Province. Again, that is 2009 statistics. It is considerably higher than that today is my guess.

That is the total cost of reacting to homelessness – over \$26 million a year. The total cost of pro-acting to homelessness, which means finding shelters – long-term housing, rather, not shelters – but finding long-term housing, providing a better rental allowance than the \$299 a month, allowing people to find housing where they can live and be safe; and potentially then, once you find housing and once you know you are in a safe environment, as opposed to shopping around for a shelter every night, once you know you are in housing, in a unit, then you can focus on your health, because you cannot focus on your health when you are wandering the street every day. You cannot focus on your health when you are sleeping under a bridge or on a park bench. You find a bed for somebody, a permanent bed, in a home that they can call their own, and they can focus on their health. Then

they can focus on contributing back to society, as opposed to being a drain.

So, again, I want to go back to the cost of reacting to homelessness, based on the 2009 statistics – it is \$26 million a year. The cost of pro-acting to homelessness is \$14 million a year – well, \$14,620,000 – so, \$11,400,000 cheaper to be proactive when dealing with homelessness. That is \$11,400,000 less – based on 2009 statistics – so we are probably \$16 million or \$18 million or \$20 million today. We do not know for sure what the figure is today based on 2015, but we do know that the number of homeless in this Province, the population of homeless in this Province, has doubled every two years over the last six or eight years. So even based on the 2009 statistics, it is \$11,400,000 in savings to government to be proactive to homelessness, as opposed to reacting by providing shelters.

Mr. Speaker, we have already discussed the fact that anybody who is using drug treatment or in a psychiatric ward or in hospital, as a result of being homeless, as a result of addictions issues, which stem from homelessness, are considerable higher. That is \$45,000 per individual per year.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about this issue, again I just want to reiterate that you look at the number of people who are homeless in this Province, at any given point on any given day, based on 2009 numbers it is about 1,000 people – over 900 people. At any given point on any given day, on average it is over 900 people every single day. I think there were 5,500 people who were affected by homelessness. That is the number they use on an annual basis; 5,500 people, but over 900 at any given point on any given day. That is an awful lot of people, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at the cost of providing shelters – again, I am making the argument that we are better off to be proactive. We are better off to look at government's own consultant, the former Auditor General in this Province, the former Auditor General who was hired by government to provide advice. He had indicated that to have a single rate, whether you are a single individual receiving \$299 or a family receiving \$522 for rent in this Province under Income Support, that rate is the same whether you are in St. John's –

or the example he used – in Piccadilly. We do know that rental rates in St. John's and in Piccadilly are considerably different.

On this side of the House, we put forward a private member's resolution eighteen months ago. We were hoping that in last year's Budget it would be addressed, but it was not addressed. Again, hoping in this year's Budget, but in this year's Budget Estimates when we asked about that, our side was told government are still studying it. That private member's resolution was voted on unanimously and it would have dealt with the rental allowance rates in this Province. Government have still not addressed that issue, Mr. Speaker, have still not addressed that issue.

I see the Speaker indicating to me that the clock has run out. I thank you, and I will have another opportunity to speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I understand we are planning to recess in about ten minutes, so I will have a few words for ten minutes and then I will ask for a motion to recess the House until later this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to stand up and just have a few words this afternoon. It is my second chance to speak to the Budget. For the people at home, we are discussing the main motion of the Budget. Each individual member gets an opportunity to speak if they so choose to the Budget and the main motion of the Budget. I am very pleased to stand here this afternoon and have a few words.

I know earlier today the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development got up, and in response to some comments by the hon. Member for St. Barbe, was talking about some of the initiatives and some of the things that were done in his district that were needed. Between it all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a little bit about my district and talk to the people in my District of Port de Grave this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I guess for many of us, the District of Port de Grave is the beginning of Conception Bay North. Conception Bay North would stretch all the way along Conception Bay, but when I was growing up playing softball we were known as Conception Bay North. The District of Port de Grave would probably be the beginnings of Conception Bay North, going all the way to Carbonear and probably even down the North Shore.

Mr. Speaker, the district starts in Makinsons, a small local service community. When I inherited it in 2011 I had some issues, and I will speak to them a little bit. It takes in the communities of Clarkes Beach, North River, and the largest municipality in Conception Bay North, Bay Roberts, a town of 5,800 in a service centre. I see my hon. colleague smiling at me across the way from Carbonear – Harbour Grace. He calls his town the hub of the bay, I call mine the engine of the bay, but anyway that is between us.

Again, the community of Bareneed and Port de Grave, going down the Port de Grave Peninsula. I share the Town of Spaniard's Bay with my colleague across the way, and we have talked about that from both ends on many occasions. As well, Mr. Speaker, the Town of Bishop's Cove going down the shore, and I have 99.5 per cent of Upper Island Cove. I share the other piece, again, with my hon. colleague across the way.

Mr. Speaker, that area, Makinsons to Upper Island Cove, takes in some 12,000 hard-working people. Most of those people you would consider as skilled tradesmen, people who have worked at painting, plastering, electricians, plumbers. A lot of them have worked on the major projects not only in Newfoundland and Labrador, but throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, I could say that a large portion of my working population is transient. We have a large segment of the population that still commutes on a regular basis out of the Province for work, whether they are in Alberta, whether they are in Ontario, and some even in the United States and the Caribbean. Again, they are hard-working people who work in the trades and are very proud. We also have a segment of our population who are professional people, lawyers,

doctors, teachers, professionals; a large segment of that. Those people, as well, work very hard in my district.

I would be remiss if I never talked about the fishery. We get up here and we talk about the fishery on many occasions – the Minister of Fisheries. Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say the fishery is probably the economic engine that drives my district. When the fishery is good, we know it. We know it in our shops, we know it in our car dealerships, and we know that retail sales are up.

This year has been a good crab season. Many of our crab fishermen have had very successful early catches –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: – some are doing very well. There are some challenges, Mr. Speaker, but this year has been a good crab season to date for the people who are fishing out of Port de Grave and out of Upper Island Cove.

Mr. Speaker, as well, these people, these harvesters – and I have somewhere close to sixty or sixty-five harvesters in my district on sixty-five footers and less who employ a large number of people. The average number – and my hon. colleague across the way can correct me – is about five people per boat. They produce significant economic benefits.

All these people, Mr. Speaker, have been doing very well this year in the crab fishery. Are there challenges? Sure there are, the fishery will always be a challenge. It is a renewable resource. We have all talked about the management of the fishery in this House, the lack of management, the lack of the need for new policies, and new direction. That challenge is coming again because members in this House last week debated the private member's resolution on the cod fishery. We know the cod is coming back and we are going to have to be ready for that. There is going to be a challenge to that as well, Mr. Speaker, because we need our fishermen.

I was talking to a couple of our harvesters last week. If we are going to go back into the cod fishery it has to be economically viable for those people who equip their boats and get their nets and do all that. So they are going to have to have a certain quota. I know the hon. member talked about allocations last week. Maybe it might have to be allocations, but I think for an individual harvester to go back in the cod fishery and gear up for the cod fishery, I think we are going to have to look at some kind of quotas and reasonable quotas that make it economically viable for those harvesters to go back into the cod fishery.

So, Mr. Speaker, the fishery is an important part of my district. It drives industry, it drives commercial interest in our towns, and it drives our retail sector. We have a large volume of retail sector in the Port de Grave district that is dependent on the success of the fishery, because we certainly know when the fishery is well.

As well, in recent years, particularly in the last two censuses, we have had population growth. I would consider my district, the District of Port de Grave, an urban-rural district. It has some urban-rural characteristics. If you look at the Town of Bay Roberts, roughly around 5,800 people, that is a large town in our Province, and I would consider that fairly urban in nature. If you go to a community like Makinsons or Bishop's Cove, it is more rural in nature, a little older in population, but again, we have features of it all. So my district I would consider urban-rural.

Mr. Speaker, we have all talked about it, and every time someone gets up we talk about our seniors. I have always got to be aware in our district as well, because 40 per cent of the population in my district are seniors on fixed incomes. When we make changes in HST and add back, that has impacts. So you have to do something to balance that. I believe in this Budget we have done some things to balance some of the impact of the increase in HST and the additional 8 per cent on our electricity bills.

Those are challenges that we all face, but again, when I sit in this House, or my hon. colleague got up today and he talked about people – well, it is people; it is all about people. When I got involved in public life when I was the Mayor of

the Town of Bay Roberts and a councillor, or I am here, it is all about people, and the people coming first.

Mr. Speaker, we always have to remind ourselves of the impact on those who are on fixed incomes, because they are the ones that are challenged. They are the ones that are challenged when we have to pay their oil bill, or they have to go out and put groceries on their table. We have the oldest aging population in the country, so we have to be aware of that. We have provided some balance in our Budget and we talked about the seniors' tax benefit and some of those increases earlier when I got up earlier to speak.

I would probably argue – and I would probably get some good discussion with my hon. colleague opposite if I called the District of Port de Grave the commercial centre of Conception Bay North. We could argue that back and forth until the cows come home, but I consider the District of Port de Grave probably the commercial centre for Conception Bay North, and we share that distinction. We may be able to share that distinction, but again, we have thriving population. We have had a lot of new young people come in and build in our area.

Mr. Speaker, seeing the clock and it being 4:40 p.m., I ask if we could recess debate and come back again and begin debate at 7:00 this evening.

I ask that the House go to recess.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

We have a Management Commission scheduled for 5:00 p.m. Management Commission meetings have to take place in camera – in the House rather, on camera. We need a little time to set up, so I would ask members' co-operation if we could adjourn debate until 7:00 p.m. If that is good with everybody, the House will recess until 7:00 p.m.

The Management Commission will meet at 5:00 p.m. and we will return 7:00 p.m.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The House is in recess until 7:00 p.m.