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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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15 May 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today I'd like to wish the Member for Exploits a happy birthday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I understand that today, in addition to our Members' statements, the Member for Lake Melville has leave of the House to present a private Member's statement.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Ferryland, Mount Pearl North, Stephenville – Port au Port, Mount Pearl – Southlands, Labrador West, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, and Lake Melville.

The hon. the Member for the District of Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today and recognize a 12-year-old boy from Witless Bay in my district for providing assistance and first aid to his friend, and ultimately saving his life.

Stephen Coffey and his friend Jamie Coombs were in the woods on April 6 building a fort when Jamie had an accident and a severe cut with an axe. Jamie's knee began to bleed heavily, the boys quickly headed for home. Jamie started to get weak and was unable to walk. Stephen had to carry him out of the woods. Once the boys arrived at home, Stephen applied pressure to the wound until medical help arrived. Without the quick thinking of Stephen, the outcome of the accident could have been a lot different. I would like to acknowledge the

strength and courage of Stephen in doing such a remarkable act and bringing his friend to safety.

Stephen will be receiving a Life-Saving Award from St. John Ambulance at Mobile Central High School on Monday, May 29.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all Members of the House to join me in congratulating Stephen Coffey in receiving this award and for his strength and quick thinking.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a business in my district, Green Rock Electric Vehicle Solutions. Green Rock E.V.S. is Atlantic Canada's only 100 per cent electric vehicle dealer and service centre.

In the spring of 2013, Green Rock opened its doors to provide a new outlook on electric transportation. With electric cars and charging stations, this innovative business is here to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. Electric vehicles have zero tailpipe emissions, and in jurisdictions where most electricity comes from clean, renewable sources, they generate next to no emissions at all.

I commend Green Rock for the green innovation that they provide to Newfoundland and Labrador. Since opening, they have over 40 vehicles on the road which have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by over 500 tons. They are also working closely with businesses and municipalities to incorporate electric vehicles into their fleets, and help with public education about electric vehicles and their economic and environmental benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in recognizing the team at Green Rock E.V.S., John, Sarah, Johnny, Dennis, Jennifer and April, for being leaders in environmental protection and entrepreneurial innovation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize John St. Croix of Stephenville. John is a Level III student at Stephenville High who currently holds the schools top academic average at 98 per cent and has held the top academic average in the school each year since grade nine. In addition to his high academic achievement, John is an extremely talented multi-sport athlete, a coach, pianist, mentor to his peers and a dedicated and passionate community volunteer.

John has represented the province the past two years on the provincial cross-country skiing team competing at the national level and recording back-to-back top 20 finishes. He has also represented the province at the Canada games as a member of the provincial squash team.

Always willing to help others, this humbly young man spends time volunteering with the Special Olympics, coaches young skiers, tutors his peers and volunteers at St. Stephen's Parish.

John graduated this past weekend and will be attending Queens University in Kingston this fall having recently won a \$60,000 scholarship to study geological engineering.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating John on his remarkable accomplishments and wish him well in his post-secondary studies.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to recognize an event which has become a showcase for some of the best young talent this province has to offer. Etcetera 31, entitled Dancin in the Street, took place at the Glacier

from May 9 to 13 where all in attendance were treated to amazing instrumental, vocal and dance performances from numerous musical genres.

From Disney's *Moana* to Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven," from selections from the movie *Grease* to Damian Follett's "No Place Like Home," from *Fame* to rock-and-roll legend Meatloaf, Etcetera 31 had it all.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Musical Director Carl Goulding, Production Manager Jackie Goulding, Artistic Director Justin Goulding, Stage Manager Rebecca Goulding, corporate sponsors, the parent committee, the coaches, choreographers, set and costume designers, volunteers, and most importantly, the members of the Mount Pearl Show Choir, Junior Show Choir, The Company, and the Musical Theatre Camp, as well as the many other performers from Mount Pearl Senior High, Mount Pearl Intermediate, Morris Academy, Paradise Elementary, Elizabeth Park Elementary, Laval High School, Newtown Elementary, St. Kevin's High, and St. Peter's Junior High on yet another tremendous Etcetera show.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And so the adventure begins! That's the theme the graduates of Menihek High School adopted for their 2017 graduation held on Saturday, May 17, in Labrador West.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the 110 young men and women of the Menihek graduation class of 2017 and thank them for including me in their graduation ceremonies.

Valedictorian, Emily Benson, gave a very inspiring speech, reminiscing about their school years in Labrador West and challenged her fellow graduates to strive to be the best they can be as they pursue further education and training opportunities. I want to personally thank the

teaching staff of Menihek under the guidance of Principal Fraser Drover, and Vice-Principal Eugene Costello, who continuously provides quality education to their students.

Over 800 proud parents, grandparents, caregivers and invited guests attended the ceremonies as they watched their sons and daughters achieve this great milestone.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the 2017 graduation class of Menihek High and wish them well in all their future endeavours, wherever this great adventure may lead them.

Let the adventure begin!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Conservation Corps Newfoundland and Labrador. I am happy to rise to congratulate them for the invaluable work they do in the District of St. John's East – Quidi Vidi and indeed in districts throughout the province.

The Conservation Corp's Green Teams give students meaningful employment opportunities focused on local environmental and cultural projects developed in partnership with communities, organizations and corporations.

This summer, a Green Team in St. John's will be working in partnership with Northeast Avalon Atlantic Coastal Action Program on a stream water quality project, and I understand a community gardening project is in the works as well. I look forward to visiting the Green Team project sites to see first-hand the positive community work they're doing.

Congratulations to Conservation Corps on 25 years. I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking them for the Green Teams and other important work they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Lake Melville.

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

On Friday, Lake Melville experienced a challenging combination of problems. Trouble began when a structured failure on the transmission line, east of Churchill Falls, led to a wide-spread power failure. At the same time, an ice jam on the Goose River caused water to back up, flooding Route 520 between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and North West River. Many people were cut off from their homes and/or were without power for 24 hours.

Staff with Transportation and Works and their contractor, Grey Rock, escorted emergency vehicles until water levels were too high. At that point, Labrador-Grenfell Health mobilized helicopter transport for patients. The Salvation Army helped secure accommodations on Friday and prepared meals for over 400 affected residents on Saturday. 5 Wing Goose Bay was also in contact to offer support, if needed. Several departments were involved in coordinating the response.

Municipal and Band Council leadership were hands on as the situation unfolded. I would like to especially recognize Mayor Montague of North West River and Chief Hart of Sheshatshiu who worked closely with their isolated residents to ensure everyone was looked after.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to acknowledge those who came together under the adversity of this past weekend. During a difficult time, the community spirit of Upper Lake Melville shown through.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to inform the House of an increase in the hourly wage rate of a very deserving group of Job Trainers and coaches throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is renowned as a leader in helping people with intellectual disabilities integrate more fully in the community by securing and maintaining mutually beneficial employment. The Supported Employment Program is run out of 18 community organizations throughout the province and helps these individuals more fully participate in their communities and in their own lives. A key contributor to that success is the one-on-one support provided by Job Trainers.

With \$1 million in additional funding, the provincial government has raised the hourly wage rate for Job Trainers from the current level of \$12.25 an hour to \$14.80, effective April 1, with a further increase to \$15.55 per hour which will come into effect of July 1, 2017. Mr. Speaker, this brings the wage rate more closely in line with similar occupations.

This increase will help employers throughout the province recruit Job Trainers more effectively. It will increase the opportunity for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with intellectual disabilities to secure employment and will be of benefit to each and every one of us and the communities we represent.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The 18 community organizations throughout the province which are engaged in Supported Employment Programs are to be

commended for their efforts, and this side of the House supports their success.

Any incident in action by the government which increases the opportunity for those with intellectual disabilities is a positive one, and the overall support of these individuals involved in these important organizations are a progressive move in our society.

These additional supports should enhance this important network and provide enhancements to the community as a whole. We will always encourage making more opportunities available for persons with disabilities, and we will be closely monitoring this program to ensure that it functions to the best of its ability.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm pleased to see this long-overdue pay increase finally put in place. Job Trainers have been underpaid for too long, considering the important work they do.

The 18 organizations providing this important service may now be better able to retain Job Trainers, which will benefit their clients. But I wonder: How long will it take the minister to realize the obvious logic of this decision applies also to the province's minimum wage earners?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to recognize a historic milestone – the 50th anniversary of the Bay d'Espoir hydroelectric generating facility. First power flowed on May 12, 1967.

The Bay d'Espoir plant was constructed to provide the Island with a large source of affordable hydroelectric power. Bay d'Espoir remains a key part of our energy infrastructure as Hydro continues to improve and develop our electricity sources for future generations.

The Bay d'Espoir system today comprises of a string of reservoirs which, connected together, extend over 150 kilometres, starting at Victoria Lake, near the road to Burgeo, and running to Long Pond in Bay d'Espoir.

The system has a generating capacity of more than 600 megawatts of power which is produced from seven generating units at the Bay d'Espoir hydroelectric generating facility, as well as the hydroelectric facilities at Upper Salmon and Granite Canal which were developed later. Combined, these three hydroelectric generating plants provide about 75 per cent of the hydroelectric power generated on the Island.

Currently an additional 188 kilometre high-voltage transmission line running from Bay d'Espoir to the Avalon is under construction and is expected to be in service this fall. This line ensures stability and reliability of electricity to the Avalon Peninsula.

Almost 100 people work at the Bay d'Espoir plant providing the power that serves hundreds of thousands of people across the Island of Newfoundland every day. I applaud them for the work that they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. I certainly, too, join the minister in recognizing those individuals who work for Newfoundland Hydro in the operations of the Bay d'Espoir hydroelectric generation facility.

As the minister said, this facility has been operational for 50 years and continuing to

provide reliable electricity to many residents on the Island portion of the province, as water continues to flow. I know in my own district, we have the first-ever generating station in Petty Harbour, which was opened in January of 1900.

With the current construction of the transmission line from Bay d'Espoir generating facility into the Avalon, the stability of electricity system in our province will certainly be enhanced. I also wish to note the liability and sustainability of electricity system in our province will be further enhanced when the Island portion of the province is connected to the North American electricity grid through the Labrador-Island Link and certainly the Maritime Link as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

As we celebrate the Bay d'Espoir project, which was needed at the time and which has successfully provided affordable power for the past 50 years, one question stands out. It will take the next 50 years for the people of this province to get out from under the financial burden of the Muskrat Falls hydro project. It wasn't needed; there were other choices. The power will never be affordable and possibly not be reliable. I ask: Why was that project ever started?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, through the 300 taxes and fee increases that the Liberal government introduced last year and maintain this year, people are feeling the heat. People are being forced into deciding which bills to pay and some, more than ever before, are being forced into bankruptcy.

Now that the government has seen the light and the importance of reducing taxes, like they're doing with the gas tax, I ask the Premier, will you move immediately to eliminate the 15 per cent tax on insurance in Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can't say I'm happy today, but the fact that I get a chance to speak to this is important for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As the PC leader and the Leader of the Opposition would know, it's a result of the mismanagement and the poor planning they've done for 12 years, Mr. Speaker, not planning for where we are today. Indeed, they governed by oil; made decisions that are impacting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the next full generation, saying that oil would never go below \$100 a barrel.

Mr. Speaker, when you make a decision it must be sustainable. We've seen many examples of decisions that have been made by the prior administration that were simply not sustainable.

We don't like those taxes, Mr. Speaker, but last year at this time we were facing a \$2.7 billion deficit as a result of the incompetency of the management of the prior administration. It was ridiculous. We don't like it, Mr. Speaker. When we can get to reduce those taxes in a sustainable way, we will do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not a totally unexpected kind of response from the Premier that we've heard so many times. The truth and the fact is, Mr. Speaker, in recent years the RNC are reporting, from 2013 to 2016, a 25

per cent reduction in accidents in their jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, we know Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have the highest taxes on insurance premiums anywhere in the country. The taxi industry is screaming for help. They were prepared today to park their cars and to focus on looking for some way for the cost to be alleviated by government, but we haven't seen that yet. We know they're working with them.

I ask the Premier: What will you do to ensure that the taxi industry remains viable?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question.

First of all, and to inform the House, I've just concluded my second rather broad meeting with stakeholders from the taxi industry; a very productive meeting. For the last couple of months I've been working closely with them.

There's no question that the rates that some taxi companies are paying per individual car – for example, I just saw some bills in the vicinity of some \$7,000 to \$10,000 per car. Clearly, this situation has really gotten to a very serious state.

I would reference back, however – if I look back and look at some of the decisions made by government some 10 years ago and key policy moves which have actually helped to create this situation. On the other side, the industry does need to address a lot of the professionalism, a lot of the claims. We're finding very high claims. So it's going to be a combination of working together. I look forward to working with this industry association very closely.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the evidence-based decision process followed by this government, last year when they put this additional tax on vehicles and on homes, all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are really impacted by it.

I ask the minister: How many fewer vehicles are on the road today are uninsured as a result of the insurance tax being put on by the Liberal government?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: In terms of answering the question directly, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the number of cars, I don't know. But I can tell you that having met with the industry representatives, it's no question that they are considering that option. Some have already had to consider that option.

I would point out, and as the Premier just alluded to it, we had to take some serious action, such as the 15 per cent retail tax on insurance. I look forward to the day when we can take action on that; however, when you're talking in the vicinity of some \$7,000 to \$10,000 per car, there are a lot more serious issues going on.

I just sat with industry reps and we went through some 17 different action items that they have asked of us that we have offered to the table; and, if you like, we have formulated sort of a mandate letter for my department and my role to address this problem.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know of anything more serious that the minister could have commented today, but not knowing how many vehicles or uninsured vehicles may be on the road today. How many homes –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: How many homes are no longer insured because of the taxes, the new tax that the Liberals put on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

So I ask the minister – I'll ask the Premier: Will he ask the Public Utilities Board to conduct a full review on insurance costs which are directly hitting every Newfoundland and Labradorian?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure the Member opposite knows, within the mandate for this department that is indeed the obligation of Service NL, which is to initiate a review of the automobile insurance system. That is to occur this fiscal year. I look forward to proceeding with that as soon as possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance was giving a talk this morning to a particular group and gave somewhat of an update in regard to public service negotiations.

I ask the minister: Could she give an update to the people of the province today on current negotiation status?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, for the Member opposite, I'd be happy to provide an update to Members of this House on the status of collective bargaining.

We have spent the month of April working through with a number of our unions, particularly NAPE and CUPE, on conciliation

processes. We are at a position now where we have reached out to NAPE in particular, and asked them if they would consider agreeing to a tier 2 table.

We feel that's an appropriate step to continue to try and have meaningful dialogue about the very serious situation that we have with regard to a significant deficit in this province and the fact that we spend over \$3 billion worth of our entire budget on employee salaries and benefits, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll ask the minister: Could she expand more on her reference to a two-tier negotiating system.

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

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

I'd just like to correct the Member opposite. What I said was a tier 2 table, which is a description that we have used to describe a full group from NAPE, their selection, as well as a group of our negotiators and leads on this particular project, an important conversation that we have to have so that we can have a conversation about the issues that both sides of the table have currently on the table.

We have been very clear with our public sector unions that we continue to want to try to achieve meaningful dialogue. Unfortunately, at this point we have seen very little progress happen, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Is your government supporting the 9 per cent rate increase to

electricity prices when Nalcor reported just last week its profits doubled to \$57 million in the first quarter of 2017?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you for the question. It's a very important question.

The rate increase that was recently announced by the Public Utilities Board has to do with the rate stabilization fund. This fund is all around fuel prices.

Mr. Speaker, each year it's the normal process of the Public Utilities Board to ask the utilities for information on the fluctuation of fuel prices. Some will remember they just recently got a rebate for those fuel prices. Others will remember there was a decrease last year because the price of fuel was down.

The Public Utilities Board – under great review, which is what they're supposed to do, Mr. Speaker, of the utilities – considered the information provided and made their assumptions and have told hydro what their rate increases will be for the rate stabilization fund this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, revenues that are generated by Nalcor, the intent is to assist in terms of overall cost of the entity.

I ask the minister: Will you direct Nalcor to use profits to eliminate the rate increase which hit taxpayers' pockets beginning in July of this year?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I think the Member opposite is referring to the fact that we will be rate managing because of the exorbitant costs of the Muskrat Falls Project.

This government has been very clear, that because of the Muskrat Falls Project there will be increases. The former administration talked about those increases. We do have money in the budget to deflect and reduce and make sure that rate increases coming forward because of their decisions around the Muskrat Falls Project. He's referring to the rate stabilization fund. He's referring to a report of the Public Utilities Board. It is completely separate from what we are doing to ensure that rates are managed in this province because of the decisions of the former administration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister telling us that the rate mitigation through the sale of excess energy is not an option that's available to her; the savings that they have on securing the loan guarantee and the interest savings of that is not within her mandate, her ability to reduce rates? Is that what the minister is saying?

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

MS. COADY: I think the Member opposite is misinformed, Mr. Speaker. He's confusing the two issues. The Public Utilities Board, every year, looks at the rate stabilization fund, looks at the rising fuel prices and makes a determination as to what's reasonable to the fluctuation of prices.

When you look, Mr. Speaker, at the exorbitant cost the people of this province are going to have to assume because of the Muskrat Falls Project, he can rest assured that this administration, this government, will rate manage. It's too bad they didn't put anything into effect when they were considering the Muskrat Falls Project.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recent changes to public exam requirements have been described by the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association as discriminatory to students with hearing loss.

Minister, why did your government make these changes?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, there's a very good reason why the previous PC Party administration decided to include a listening component on the public examination for English 3201, a very good reason why the previous administration decided to take us down this road, and that's because listening is one of the six key categories in the kindergarten to grade 12 Language Arts curriculum.

Most students accomplish that through listening, through hearing. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing utilize other cueing strategies like American Sign Language, assistive technology or speech reading. So that's why the previous administration brought this policy into effect.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, just over a year ago the minister himself noted in a letter in response to the Hard of Hearing: Accommodations for assessing listening are expected to be in place for a deaf or hard of hearing student long before the exam is administered. Well, obviously, we know that hasn't happened. That's why there's an outcry now from students and the Hard of Hearing Association.

In 2016, the Liberals slashed almost \$100,000 in support for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. In their 2017 Liberal budget, the

government removed the line item dedicated to support for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Minister, how much support are you cutting for these students this year?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, those accommodations are supposed to be in place for Kindergarten to grade 12 students long before they get to the public exam. It's true now, it was true last year and it was true all the years before; they are entitled to get those accommodations.

We are working with the school districts to ensure that happens. The province is spending approximately \$120 million on special support services for students. That includes American Sign Language, assistive technologies, other assistance to ensure that students have all the tools that they need through the curriculum, through the public examinations and other examinations they write. Those accommodations should be there because we are paying for them to be there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, what the minister forgets, it's a change in policy last year and this year that they've implemented, where they don't have the supports in place to accommodate those who are doing public exams, who have a hearing impairment here.

So, Mr. Speaker, they're not addressing that need and it puts a particular student at risk of not being able to achieve the goal that they wanted to in their academics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Did the minister meet face to face with the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association before making decisions that directly affect these individuals?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, as is the norm here in the House of Assembly, the Education critic for the PC Party continues to demonstrate not just an ignorance of the decisions that were made while he sat at the Cabinet table, but a complete and utter ignorance of the Kindergarten to grade 12 system and all the supports and accommodations that are provided therein.

Last year, when this issue was reported by CBC, around exactly the same situation, I asked staff to meet with the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association. They did meet with that group. I thought this issue had been resolved. We explained very clearly that when the previous PC Party Education minister brought this policy in, specialists for deaf and hard of hearing students, other people who are involved in the provision of special accommodations, were involved in the development of their policy.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you.

Minister, so obviously the answer is no. And if you talk to the program director of the Hard of Hearing Associations, they have acknowledged that these services had not been put in place to accommodate students this year doing their public exams.

Minister, can you tell this House, and those listening at home, what is the minimum number of students required for programs at CNA?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, it is reasonable to expect that before a class would be offered that there would be either a reasonable complement of students. Having no student supply for a particular class or very, very few students apply

for a particular class would not be a reasonable basis for a class to proceed.

I will tell you what is also unreasonable but has been done year after year after year for the last number of years. When the PCs were in charge of the government, the College of the North Atlantic spent down cash reserves to the point where the College of the North Atlantic nearly went into insolvency. That was not helpful to the advancement of post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it will not happen while this government is in charge.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, as a former graduate of CNA, and I know the tens of thousands of other graduates would say, that the college system has been great. It wasn't insolvent. The professionalism was always adequate and exemplified the student process and the quality of education that we had.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Minister, it was recently reported that a reprieve may be given to CNA Bonavista campus, which will allow them to continue with their college program.

Will a reprieve also be extended to the campus in St. Anthony?

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

MR. BYRNE: Let me correct the hon. Member. Mr. Speaker, the teaching at the College of the North Atlantic was never adequate. It was superior. He may refer to it as adequate, but it was superior. We will continue with that tradition and we will advance it because now we're engaging in professional development. We're increasing the opportunities for our instructors to become more professional, to be able to get further certifications.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member is arguing that where there are no students requesting to be enrolled in a class, or there are

one or two or three or four students asking to enroll in a class, it is his position that the class should continue. Why then, Mr. Speaker, were four academic programs shut down in 2013 and several classes cut?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: So the hon. minister is at seven programs already cut down, and counting. We were talking about comparing Bonavista and St. Anthony, which my understanding, talking to officials there, an equal number of students have been enrolled in both of these programs or have applied for it. So if you're going to make chalk of one and cheese of the other, there is something wrong here with your assessment of the education process for people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the minister: Will he commit to not changing the delivery model for the ABE program without reviewing all data, sharing it with the public and holding stakeholder meetings?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, the programs at Bonavista, the programs in St. Anthony, the programs in Baie Verte, the programs in several campuses, the seven classes – I'll differentiate between classes and programs. That administration over there shut down permanently four programs, including the Adult Basic Education program.

Newfoundland and Labrador is now the only public college system, that I'm aware of, that does not offer Adult Basic Education. In fact, the decisions that were taken in 2013, now upon review, it has become abundantly clear there was absolutely no financial data which was available then or now to have supported the conclusions that were reached.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, before any changes are made to the Adult Basic Education program, I can assure you there will be a thorough review.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: I need to clarify to the minister that the information was accurate, and it did justify it. And not only that, but in your own briefing notes that you got when you became minister it states, the review of the 2013 assessment of the ABE outlined that it was more efficient financially and more successful if the private not-for-profit sector offered the program, which has happened in the last three years and been very successful. We've gone from 17 offerings, 17 campuses through the CNA program, to 24 now in the private not-for-profit sector. So, Mr. Speaker, the evidence speaks for itself that this has been very successful.

Why is the minister continuing to promote he is moving the ABE program back to CNA, when he is aware that the present delivery model offered by the private not-for-profit sectors are much more cost effective and successful?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BYRNE: Interesting line of questioning, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that was the government that shut down ABE at the College of the North Atlantic system. That was the government that did put forward the numbers that suggested that a cost per student was at a certain rate.

Well, let me explain something to the hon. Member. Shortly after the contract was awarded to the private training institutes, the private training institutes came back and said, based on the enrolment data supplied by the government and by the College of the North Atlantic in 2013, based on those numbers that were supplied, we cannot fulfill the contract according to the private institutions. They could not provide the contracts as were tendered, and they required an additional \$1 million per year to fulfill empty seats.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if that's good financial management, that's a Tory way of managing the finances.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Asphalt recyclers are sitting idle in depots. They're an important tool to address the potholes on our provincial roads.

Why is this equipment not being used help fill the potholes?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the question. I'd like to advise the hon. Member opposite that not all the recyclers are sitting idle. If you check in Central Newfoundland, they're actually out and we're mobilizing them. We've had a couple of issues on the Avalon Peninsula we're working through and these certainly will be available as soon as we're able to work through some of those challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I think that was a good investment to have these machines available and they can be mobilized. We're moving them around and we're actually doing a significant amount of pothole repairs. As you know this year, we've had a lot of real challenges when it comes to potholes and we're actually doing the best we can. We'll continue to do that to ensure that we have a safe highway for the people that are driving on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister just confirmed there is some sitting idle. That's the question I asked; he only answered part of it.

The Minister of Finance confirmed the elimination of 60 positions in TW this past year. The roads are in horrific state. What impact has the elimination of these 60 positions had on our provincial roads?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, just in case the Member opposite doesn't understand, I thought I answered the question. I said we mobilized in Central, which answered that piece of the question, and I said we had issues in Eastern. I thought it was clear.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the positions – we went through the organizational chart, we looked through managers and directors and those positions. One of the key things I want to make mention to the Member opposite that front-line workers are not impacted by the changes that we made and, as a result of that, we will continue to do the operations this summer as we done in previous years. It's a managerial change we've made, Mr. Speaker, obviously looking at trying to find better ways in which we can fit within the fiscal framework that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Does your government have any plans to help clean up the garbage in the surrounding area on the Outer Ring Road?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the garbage that's on the Outer Ring Road, in addition to the garbage that's on Pitts Memorial, that's in addition to the garbage that's across the Trans-Canada Highway both east, west, central and all over is absolutely deplorable, that we are in 2017 having to deal with these issues. It's an education piece that we have to make sure that people do not litter.

I worked very closely with Service NL over the past weekend. Before we actually take actions, we must be in a position to enforce the regulations that people cannot throw garbage out, enforce the regulations that people that are going to the Waste Management Centres must have their garbage covered.

My understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that Service NL had enforcement out during this past weekend and were actually issuing tickets. I think it was probably in excess of 30 this past weekend. We will continue to do that to address the issue, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Finance Minister continues to conduct public sector bargaining away from the bargaining table, as evidenced by her public remarks this morning to the Chartered Accountants Association.

I ask the minister if she has received any written reports from conciliation officers dealing ongoing public sector collective bargaining.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, for the Member opposite, I want to correct her preamble. The information that I shared this morning is the same information I've been sharing with everybody in the province who asked, which I shared on March 2.

We have been talking about the issues that we are wanting to have a discussion about at the bargaining table. We have seen little to no progress, and the discussions that have been happening through the conciliation process have yielded nothing different than the bargaining process to date, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Obviously, this minister is really new to negotiations and doesn't understand the process that people are used to being part of in this province and elsewhere.

I ask the minister, why does she continue to discuss collective bargaining matters in public while the conciliation process she initiated is ongoing.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Member opposite is not suggesting that the considerable group of public service employees who are working to support government's effort on collective bargaining are inexperienced. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, my experience as the minister has been that the advice from officials has been very effective.

When it comes to the conciliation process, the process is designed to enable both parties to have a meaningful dialogue and make progress. And, Mr. Speaker, our government, at the conciliation table, will do what we need to do, and has done what we needed to do; but, as of yet, I am not aware of any progress that has been made at the tables.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the minister that, in fact, it is not the public servants or the negotiating team who are speaking publicly but the minister herself.

Mr. Speaker, at least six provinces are amending their legislation to include the presumption that PTSD among first responders is a workplace injury. Whereas, in this province, the first responder has to prove the job caused their PTSD. Consequently, many workers have

compensation denied and treatment delayed, making the PTSD worse.

I ask the Minister of Service NL: When will he amend the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act* to include PTSD as a presumptive work-related illness for first responders?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much for the question.

I must say, I think this is a very serious matter. I would note that while the process of government is proceeding, I can assure the Members of the House that I am very much focused on that, including a meeting this morning.

We will be signalling that review. I look forward to entering into the House the recommendations from the previous report which, frankly, has been sitting around for way too long. I'm looking to carrying on and finally getting on with it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: I ask the minister: Will he also commit to expanding presumptive PTSD coverage to corrections officers who do incredibly difficult work and all others who repeatedly work with traumatic events and are at risk for PTSD?

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

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

I'm certainly glad to stand up here today and speak to the difficult work that our correctional officers do. In fact, last week I took the opportunity to visit our correctional officers at HMP to talk with them and learn more about what they do. Something I would note was criticized heavily by the NDP who did not care

what the correctional officers do on a day-to-day basis. They didn't want to see what was going on.

That being said, I have had discussions with union leadership on this issue. I look forward – actually, we're going to sit down soon and discuss this issue and many issues as it relates to the safety and well-being of our correctional officers. They are a group who do challenging work 24-7 in this province. Certainly, I support them in the difficult job they do.

I'm willing to have this discussion; I just wish that the NDP would support them as it relates to their work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In accordance with section 56 of the *Automobile Insurance Act*, I rise today to table the 2016-17 Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Public Utilities on Operations Carried Out under the *Automobile Insurance Act*.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

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

I'd like to move the following private Member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take immediate action to establish joint fisheries management.

That's seconded by the Member for Ferryland.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In accordance with our Standing Orders, the private Member's motion just read by the Member for Cape St. Francis will be the one that we'll request to have debated on Wednesday, Private Members' Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Further Notices of Motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

MS. COADY: Thank you.

Last week in this House the Members opposite asked for the EY costs for the Muskrat Falls report on review of the project cost schedules and related risks, interim report, and I am pleased to table a letter from the Oversight Committee as to those costs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Members of the House of Assembly are elected to represent the interest of their constituents; and

WHEREAS recall legislation would increase democracy in our province by making Members of the House of Assembly more accountable to their constituents;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to introduce recall legislation into the House of Assembly.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, last year I had an opportunity to present a private Member's motion on this very issue and, unfortunately, it was defeated by government Members.

Recall legislation is not a new concept. In fact, it was on the books in Alberta in 1936; one of the US states as far back as 1908. It's not a rare idea. Many US states have had recall at some level of their democracy. Alberta has had it in the past. British Columbia has it today. It doesn't destabilize a democracy, and many would argue that it actually strengthens democracy. There are a number of models of recall that are working elsewhere in Canada and around the world that could absolutely be considered here.

I think when we talk about democratic reform – and it's a concept that all three parties in this Legislature have talked about. We've done some things to move in that direction. This is one example of low hanging fruit, so to speak. I

think recall legislation is an easy one and one that should be pursued.

I think government should be more open to suggestions from people and to the Opposition parties. I think introducing recall legislation is a way to make our system more responsive to the public and more adaptable as well. We all know that public input can lead to better decision making as well.

I think recall legislation will shift the balance in favour of the people of province. I can understand that there are Members in this House of Assembly on the government side who may have an unsettled feeling in their stomachs when they think about that, but I think we need to look to recall legislation as a way to improve the democratic process in our province and in our society. None of us ought to believe that we're so smart that we're incapable of being shown better choices by the people who elected us, and I believe that can happen and does happen.

How arrogant would it be to believe that a Member is wiser than the voters who elected the Member? Over the years we've taken all sorts of shifts in favour or giving voters greater control over the way things work in our House and our government. There were referendums on constitutional change regarding education. There have been free votes in this House of Assembly from time to time. We now have fixed-term election legislation that restricts a government's power to call an election when it is most politically advantageous to the governing party. We have whistleblower legislation, and I could go on and on.

This is just the next logical step in democratic reform, Mr. Speaker. I'd encourage government to seriously look at it.

Thank you.

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

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

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament

assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS government has removed the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books which will raise the tax on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS an increase in the tax on books will reduce book sales, to the detriment of local bookstores, publishers and authors, and the amount collected by government must be weighed against the loss in economic activity caused by higher book prices; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest literacy rates in Canada, and the other provinces do not tax books because they recognize the need to encourage reading and literacy; and

WHEREAS this province has many nationally and internationally known storytellers, but we will be the only people in Canada who will have to pay our provincial government a tax to read the books of our own writers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government not to impose a provincial sales tax on books.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is probably one of the easiest taxes to reverse, and we know in fact that it's a rebate, a point of sale rebate, but this is in fact – the way people talk about it is that it's an imposed tax on books. It would be one of the easiest ones to reverse.

The other issue is that taxing books sends a message that books are a luxury, that they're not a necessity, because there are a number of necessities that are not taxed simply because they are a basic necessity to life.

When we look at the fact that we have the lowest literacy rate, one would think that the logical conclusion is, therefore, books are absolutely a necessity, and to tax them not only sends a negative message about that but it also

makes it harder for people to be able to buy books.

We're the only province in the country that taxes books, provincially. Nova Scotia and PEI recently looked at doing it. They were going to look at doing it, but they dropped the idea after the public really resisted. Our public is resisting, but this government is not listening. They're not hearing their people.

In Nova Scotia in 2015, –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In Nova Scotia in 2015, there was a petition and a whole social media campaign by publishers, booksellers, students and librarians to tell the government they did not want to see taxes on books.

Now, our taxes are a collective thing that we do as citizens of the province to say we fairly and justly pay our taxes so that the province can run and that the people have the basic necessities in order to thrive.

Mr. Speaker, this is not honouring that.

Thank you very much.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Marine Atlantic ferry rates continue to rise, becoming increasingly more cost prohibitive; and

WHEREAS increased rates have an impact on the cost of goods being shipped into our province, as well as those products being exported out by local businesses; and

WHEREAS the ever-increasing, cost-prohibitive means of ground transport into the Island portion of our province has a negative impact on tourism;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to open a line of communication with the federal government and begin to advocate on behalf of the residents and businesses of this province, not stopping until results are finalized.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it's very unfortunate that we have to rise in this House and present this petition because we hear on a regular basis in this House about the wonderful relationship between our current provincial Liberal government and the current federal Liberal government. So one would think this is already a done deal.

We're certainly, as residents of this province, are going to continually call upon both levels of government until something is done to address this situation. Because here we are in this province now, we can barely afford to live given the measures of *Budget 2016* and the regression and stifling that have happened to our economy as a result of these policy measures. We're being gouged at the gas stations. We're being gouged at the insurance rates. We're being gouged with fee after fee after fee after fee. We feel it is incumbent upon government to really take this situation in hand and do something about these fees and ensure that there are no more increases. In fact, we would like to see the fees we're currently paying be reduced.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the US Center for Disease Control now estimates that autism spectrum disorder affects one in 68 children, which represents a 30 per cent increase from the estimate two years ago; and

WHEREAS early diagnosis of ASD is essential because there is a critical developmental period when early intervention is vital for future success of children with ASD; and

WHEREAS in other provinces an ASD diagnosis can be made by specialists certified and trained in ADOS;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to allow other specialists trained and certified with ADOS to make the autism spectrum disorder diagnosis.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, members of the community of children and adults affected by autism spectrum disorder, as well as members of the general public who really understand how serious this situation is, continue to send petitions in to us to stand up and speak on their behalf here in the House of Assembly.

Obviously, they continue to try to get government to hear what they're saying. By standing and reading their petition, we support them in that effort to have government listen to what they're talking about. Because the issues still goes on, Mr. Speaker, and as the petition says early identification and intervention is important with children –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

It is important for children on the autism spectrum. Most diseases and most conditions are like that; the earlier you recognize the situation, the faster you can deal with it. It is especially true when it comes to the development of children on the spectrum.

We continue to have unacceptable wait times for a diagnosis. Yes, some steps were taken. Wait times were reduced to six months in 2015-2016, with the addition of another pediatrician doing the ADOS diagnosis, but there continues to be a long wait time, longer in areas with larger population.

Families outside the Avalon Peninsula, for example, and outside the Eastern Health region, it's not just the wait times that are difficult for them; they also have to travel away from home and sometimes outside of the province in order to receive a diagnosis more quickly. So you have a financial burden on these families that just continues. Again, government does not seem to be listening.

What we need are more people, as the petition says, Mr. Speaker. We need more specialists trained and certified with ADOS in order to do the diagnosis.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS smaller class sizes, adequate learning environment and effective curriculums are paramount to success of our youth; and

WHEREAS recent budget decisions have negatively impacted student supports, educational resources and teacher allocations; and

WHEREAS the provincial education system should ensure each child has the ability to reach his or her full potential;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to enhance the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador; introduce initiatives which ensure

smaller class sizes which will provide more sufficient personal space per child and allow more individual learning opportunities; develop efficient curriculums which enable youth to develop both life skills and optimal academic achievement; provide resources to ensure a fully beneficial inclusive model is in place; and to ensure all children in our province have equal standard of education in their learning environment.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to this a number of times about some of the challenges in the education system. I did note a couple of petitions ago about looking at and following – CBC did a three-part documentary with teachers, counsellors, even some administrators around the challenges in the school system and how they've seen things evolve over periods of time. There have been peaks and valleys when it came to challenges in the system, and points when there were resources put in, but they've identified what – these are parents, these are average citizens in the communities who have come up with these petitions. They are echoing the same thing that the teachers and counsellors and administrators have said, about the need to invest in our education system.

These are trying times. Things have changed in our society. There are challenges around inclusive education, as was noted by my colleague here from St. John's East – Quidi Vidi about some of the issues around how you deal with learning disabilities within a classroom setting and some of the resources about being identified and diagnosed so you can get the proper supports.

We've talked about mental health in our education system and how we'd be proactive versus reactive by having programs in that. We've talked about preparing our young people and our students for life skills and their ability to be able to handle situations from a financial point of view, to an integration point of view, to an empathy point of view, to an understanding of how they further choose their careers.

We've also talked about having the proper environment. We say a conducive environment:

space, so people can be counselled at a proper level, so that the teachers themselves and counsellors within the school system have the mechanism, the resources to be able to deal with situations.

We've also talked about, and it's been identified and it's becoming more and more prevalent, when you have a larger school and larger classes, when you have some students who may have some challenges, we're now noting there's violence in classrooms which disrupts their whole learning environment. It puts kids who normally weren't facing any of these stressors, under stress. We've seen that.

We've had counsellors identify there are kids at a certain age will not go to class on certain mornings because they know there's a disruption going to happen in their class and they come up with an ailment to be able to stay home. That obviously tell me we have something wrong with how we're addressing our issues. If it means we have to address things in a different manner, we have to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I will get an opportunity to speak to this again and outline some of my concerns.

Thank you.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government has not implemented curriculum to teach the basic monetary skills needed by our youth; and

WHEREAS the government of our province has a responsibility to act in the best interest of our youth; and

WHEREAS the youth of our province deserve the greatest level of respect and consideration;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to introduce financial education into provincial curriculum to prepare youth for the monetary and financial challenges of life upon entering the workforce.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I've raised this issue in the House of Assembly on behalf of constituents a number of times in the past. I've had an opportunity to tell the House about a group called FLY financial. FLY stands for Financial Literacy for Youth. It was founded, I guess about a year-and-a-half ago. Its purpose is to teach basic financial and money management skills to high school youth through their career development classes.

This group of volunteers has been to a few of our high schools in this region. They've presented to hundreds of students. The team is made up of alumni from Memorial University and they present to high schools, primarily in this region, as I said, but they're looking to expand across Newfoundland and Labrador.

They believe, and I believe, that the lack of financial literacy is causing people to be taken advantage of by credit card and lending companies, for instance. I think the lack of financial literacy can have a huge impact on people's financial futures.

There was a survey that indicated 34 per cent of Canadians said they're relying on hoping to win the lottery in order to finance their retirement. Obviously, that's not a viable strategy.

Young people are not being taught enough about debt or savings. Teaching young people about debt and savings could help future generations. We live in a time when bankruptcies are on the rise in our province. The current state of our economy really does call for increased awareness of personal finances, and individuals can find themselves in trouble by acquiring too much debt which is all too common this day in age.

Lending institutions are making lots of money from charging interest and people need to

understand exactly how those arrangements work with financial institutions, with lending companies, with credit card companies. I think Albert Einstein said compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. Those who understand it earn it, those who don't pay it.

This group that's doing work in our high schools is looking to positively impact the career development curriculum to teach youth valuable skills. This is something we shouldn't have to rely on a group of well-intended volunteers to do. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in a much more – I guess with greater emphasis placed on it within the high school curriculum.

There are lots of financial personal decisions that we all have to make. We need these life skills taught in our school system. I think the work of FLY financial is great, but I join them in calling on government to actually imbed some of that right into the high school curriculum.

Thank you.

Orders of the Day

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, Concurrence Motion, report of the Government Services Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise here today and speak to – is it 15 minutes or 20 minutes that I get?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KING: So 15 to Concurrence. This is my second time getting up speaking to the Budget, the first being on the non-confidence motion.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KING: Oh, I get 20. Thank you.

First off, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to echo your comments earlier today where you congratulated the Member for Exploits on his birthday. He's 58, and I don't know if I should say that, but he doesn't look a day over 57, Mr. Speaker. All jokes aside, he's been a great friend to me sitting here. We bounce ideas back and forth to each other and it's an honour to sit by such a distinguished person.

The last time I got up to speak, Mr. Speaker, I touched a nerve with some people out there, the Internet trolls especially. They didn't like the fact that VOCM gave me a bit of media coverage calling a backbencher says MUN can take a page out of CNA's book. You know you're doing a good job when you upset the Internet trolls. They hurl insults at you. They attack without merit. They attack you personally.

One of the things I had the biggest laugh out of, because that story that came out of VOCM was based entirely on a Facebook video that I put up on the Budget Speech, and you had one of those Internet trolls get up there and say: He never speaks to anything about his district. He talks about polar bears and upside down flags, but never speaks to anything about his district. Well, if that person who made that comment actually listened to the 20-minute speech, he would have known I talked about the gas tax, which benefits – the reduction in gas tax which is a benefit to the District of Bonavista.

I talked to a commitment to our communities through the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund; I talked about the multi-year infrastructure plan with the roads. That's another big thing for the District of Bonavista. I talked about tourism; I talked about the fishery. So if they're going to make a comment about me, at least they should be accurate.

Mr. Speaker, enough time wasted on those clowns.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KING: Probably.

AN HON. MEMBER: Facebook's alive now.

MR. KING: Facebook's alive now.

I have no issue with anyone making constructive criticism but when they attack you at a personal nature and with no merit, there's no basis to it whatsoever.

Getting back to the backbencher says MUN can take a page out of CAN's book. This gets to my first topic, Mr. Speaker, the College of the North Atlantic, the Bonavista campus, there's been quite a bit of discussion over the last number of days, weeks with the suspension of the cook and baker program.

I want to clarify one thing said in Question Period today by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. It's not a cancellation of a program; it's a suspension of a program for one year.

Last Tuesday I was fortunate enough to meet with the present CEO of the College of the North Atlantic, the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, and I spoke with stakeholders from the community. My goal at that meeting was to get the program back in the campus for this coming fall. However, as of last Monday there were three students registered, Mr. Speaker, and a cost of \$250,000 to run that program. It's a shame that we're suspending it for this year, but we are focused on getting some enrollees at the college for that program last year.

I'm going to get back to more media coverage – and I'm sure my critics wouldn't like that either – MHAs encouraging college graduates to come forward. These are very successful graduates who left the cook-baker program; they're out doing great things right now.

I helped form the post-secondary advisory committee at the College of the North Atlantic in Bonavista, which there are stakeholders all across the district in different fields. I like this saying: Success breeds success. So if we can work with the College of the North Atlantic to promote our successful students, it goes a long way in growing our campus and growing that program.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition and others decided they were going to fear monger about a closure

of the Bonavista campus, but what came out of that meeting and what's coming out of Modernization Plan 2019 is a commitment to our rural campuses. We had a firm commitment at our meeting on Tuesday to do good things at the Bonavista campus, to work and grow that campus so that anyone who questions our commitment to our rural campuses has absolutely no merit in their statement.

What we talked about was distance learning, modernizing the College of the North Atlantic so we can offer more programs in our rural campuses. It's very similar to the CDLI program that they have with the Department of Education, where you have the students in the class and you take a program like office administration where they can do it online. There will be an instructor in the classroom and they can do all their work online. That offers more programming for the campus, gets more bums in the seats, grows our campus, strengthens our region, Mr. Speaker, because we can base those programs on the needs of our region – very exciting, very forward thinking.

We also look at other ways that we can grow our campus, through contract training. If there's enough interest in a particular program, you get that program offered. It helps stimulate the campus and our rural economy.

One of the biggest things – and the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, I don't agree with him on this. I like the fellow, but I certainly don't agree with his comments on ABE. He talked about the cost associated with the private colleges versus the public system. What he neglected to mention is the campus cost of losing ABE. Bonavista campus was hit very hard when we lost ABE. What ABE would do in the Bonavista campus was have your students there, they would have a career counsellor and then they would transition to another program at the campus. That kept our numbers strong. That got people who are in the ABE program into another trade and got them employed much quicker in a higher paying job. That's my comment on CNA.

There are four big industries in my district, Mr. Speaker. We have the fishery, forestry, agriculture and tourism. I'm going to speak to the fishery a little bit near the end of this speech,

but I want to talk a little bit about the forestry. I had a great conversation this morning with Kevin Sexton of Sexton Lumber. He is doing some great things in Bloomfield-Lethbridge when it comes to innovation, when it comes to hiring full-time employees, to getting a really good product into the market.

What we talked about is challenge he's facing right now. Like I said, he's very innovative, Mr. Speaker. Last year, he upgraded his plant to allow for finger-jointing of lumber. If you don't know what finger-jointing is, I'm just going to give you a quick brief on it. So you have two small pieces of lumber, which would normally go to waste, what Kevin is doing and what they are doing at Sexton Lumber is take that, finger-jointing it, using adhesive, bonding it together and it's actually stronger than your normal piece of lumber.

So they're able to take short pieces, which they would have to throw away, and make it into lengths that can be utilized here in Newfoundland and Labrador and throughout Canada into the US. One of the issues that he talked to me a little bit about was the fact that people are a little uncertain about the product. Now, Mr. Speaker, when I did the Marine Engineering program at the Marine Institute – and I'm not going to be like the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island and say it was adequate; it was outstanding, the program that I did up there.

One of the things that we did was strengthen materials. I can tell you with this finger-jointing of these boards when it's tested, it breaks, not at the join but somewhere else on that board. You have a quality product that's actually stronger than your regular piece of lumber. But right now, there's a bit of hesitation within the industry and within municipalities to approve that sort of lumber.

Mr. Speaker, I've got a piece of paper here and it talks about the stamp that's on the – and I don't want to use a prop but it talks about the approval, all the specifications for approval that are industry standard for lumber. Unfortunately, what we have to do now is educate the inspectors within the municipalities to talk about yes, this piece of lumber is adequate – to borrow

a phrase – actually better to build your homes with, to use within construction.

We've had CBS, Paradise, St. John's and Mount Pearl kind of questioning the merits of this. So we have to do a better job of saying to their inspectors, no, this is a good product, and we need to work within the construction industry to get that out there.

I want to give a shout out to Kevin Sexton and Neil Greening who I spoke with this morning. It's just not the innovative things that they're doing; they're also working with government, Mr. Speaker. Currently, we're working on forest management agreement and Sexton is one of the industries that are providing advice to us on a management agreement, so this is going to be a long-term tenure type of a program that's going to see stability in the industry.

Under the previous government, you'd see small allocations and then they had to reapply. You'd see the lumber yards shut down for weeks at a time and then they'd slowly get more allocations. This year, we started off initially with 40,000 cubic metres of lumber and increased that to 140,000. That's going to give them long-term stability for this season, Mr. Speaker.

The former member for Terra Nova – I saw on Facebook – said: Why don't they just let them have access to the Abitibi land? Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources said last week they didn't want – the government of the time didn't want –

AN HON. MEMBER: The PC government.

MR. KING: Yes, the PC government didn't want Newfoundland industry to get that lumber because they were waiting for the next great thing to come by. In fact, people like Sexton couldn't even get a phone call answered. Their MHAs, who they would deal with, would argue with them and fight against them. So what we're seeing is collaborative approach to what we're doing in our forestry industry.

I'd be remiss if I didn't speak to the fishery because it is one of the most important industries that we do have, Mr. Speaker. One of the issues that we have in our district right now, the

District of Bonavista, is that both Bonavista and Trinity Bay are blocked with ice. So it's something I've been working on with the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, expressing the concerns that I've been hearing on behalf of my constituents. I've reached out to my federal counterparts again.

The latest email I sent today, Mr. Speaker, because I do want the people at home to know I am on your side, I am fighting for you. Good afternoon, Ministers Hadju and LeBlanc – so the minister responsible for Employment Insurance and the minister responsible for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans – as MHA for the District of Bonavista in the Newfoundland and Labrador Legislature, I'm writing to express my concerns regarding the ice condition in the Bonavista and Trinity Bays and its impact on my constituents.

For the past several weeks, ice conditions in both bays have prevented fish harvesters from getting to their respective grounds and catching their crab quotas. This had an adverse effect on plant operations at the OCI facility in Bonavista, and thus has caused a number of people not to get called back to work. Normally, both harvesters and plant workers would be well into their season; however, the ice conditions have prevented this. Many of these have had their benefits run out or close to running out. I'm requesting that EI benefits be extended until such a time when both harvesters and plant workers get back on track with their employment.

So that's what I sent as early as today. I've been talking to Minister Crocker quite a bit about this, my federal counterparts, but I feel it very important to keep pushing this issue because it is important. People are running out of EI right now and it's getting very serious. Ice is something that they cannot control, and unless we get a good strong wind to push that ice back out, sustained over several days, that's going to be very much the case for the foreseeable future.

Getting back to a little bit of the fishery; some good things we're doing in our fishery is our Seafood Innovation and Transition Program. This is geared toward focus areas of revitalization of the groundfish sector,

innovation technology, industry research and development, and strategic marketing initiatives.

What we realize as we transition from shellfish to groundfish is we need a new approach. Days of cod block being shipped out or salt fish being shipped out are gone by the wayside. We have new fish that has replaced cod as the cheap white fish. What we want to do is create a better quality product.

One thing that I'd like to see, Mr. Speaker – and I don't think I'm speaking out of turn when I say it – is a focus on our processing facilities. We have Icewater in Arnold's Cove which is doing amazing work. I'll give a shout out to my colleague from Placentia West – Bellevue because he's got a great facility there. What we'd like to see, I'd like to see and what I get from fish harvesters, is we'd like to see more processing locations here on the Island so that fishermen can get their fish to market in a timely manner. What that also does, Mr. Speaker, is create more jobs in secondary processing.

I would advocate for the OCI plant in Bonavista to have that opportunity. They've got enough space; they got the licence. So I'll be reaching out with OCI to see if they can take advantage of some money within the \$100 million fisheries fund because I think that's a great opportunity. We have fishermen who want to ship locally. We have people who want to work locally in both the shellfish and the groundfish industries. So I think we're poised for that good transition right now.

One thing that often comes to question is the management of our fish stocks, and it's always controversial. You know what, sometimes you have to step into the controversy because there's a good point made about how our fishery has been managed over the last number of years. The easy answer is to always pick a fight with Ottawa, which I don't agree with.

I look at DFO right now where we are hiring more scientists. Stephen Harper cut DFO science to the bone, but we're focusing on groundfish initiatives, groundfish science and doing it on a yearly basis. We have to get more science based, put more money and effort into the science, but while doing that we can't forget about the

harvesters and the processors, all the key stakeholders in our industry.

I think that's kind of where we went by the wayside over the past number of years. Instead of being all individuals fighting against each other, what we need to do is actually work together to grow our fishery, especially in the groundfish sector, and protect our resources, our dwindling resource in the shellfish such as shrimp and crab.

Mr. Speaker, finally – and that's my thoughts on the fishery, because you think of the District of Bonavista you think fishery and it is very, very important to my district, to the people.

I talked to a group of fishermen on Friday afternoon. In a small community, such as Old Bonaventure and New Bonaventure, they're pretty close together, but there's \$2 million of raw product that gets shipped out of there every year from 14 fishing enterprises, Mr. Speaker. That's very, very significant.

Finally, I want to talk a little bit about agriculture. I'm not going to get much of a chance because I only have a minute and 20 left. I'm hoping to get another chance to speak on this budget because I do have my opportunity in the main motion, but seeing how our time goes. I want to give a shout out to all the farmers in the District of Bonavista.

In a lot of places you see a region where there are a lot of older farmers. There's no secret that the average age of a farmer in our agriculture industry is quite high, but in the District of Bonavista, I see a number of young farmers getting into the industry. That was very prevalent at the College of the North Atlantic on April 20 when there was a livestock production seminar held.

There were about 20 people there from as far away as Mobile and Wareham in Bonavista Bay, to people in my region. If you get into meat production, it's great, but what I also see is a younger group of vegetable and dairy farmers in my district as well, Mr. Speaker.

I see my time is running out. I will be supporting *Budget 2017*. I'm happy to stand here to speak

to it on behalf of the constituents of the District of Bonavista.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a privilege to rise and speak in Concurrence for the Estimates of Government Services. Through the Estimate process, we went through a number of areas through this Committee and through the Estimates. I just want to recognize the staff who participated, along with the ministers for particular departments and recognize the work they do as public servants.

Being on the other side and being involved in the Executive and being involved in Cabinet, I have a great understanding of the amount of weeks and months they put in in terms of preparatory work and the type of work they put in. So I certainly recognize the work that was done by the public servants in the Estimates to get us there, to get the budget done and to come to Estimates and to assist the ministers in providing the information.

We went through Finance, a significant portfolio obviously; the Public Service Commission; Human Resource Secretariat; Women's Policy Office and OCIO as well, we touched on. We'll do the Consolidated Fund Services here in the Legislature in the coming days, I suspect.

One of the things with *Budget 2016* and *Budget 2017* and some of the things we've seen and some of the confusion in regard to some of the vision or direction of the current administration in regard to reducing expenditures, the one they looked at and often reference is positions; the positions of the public service.

We've been asking over the past year, even looking for 2016 numbers in regard to what that actually means to the public service and what it means to individuals out there in regard to what the future holds for them. One of the things we saw last year with 2016 is that there was a lot of

confusion, a lot of mixed messages in what was happening, what the direction was, if you will.

When the budget was brought down in 2016, there was going to be a budget to generate revenues, then there was going to be a mid-year update, then there was going to be in the fall a second budget to deal with expenditures and layoffs, and then preparatory work rolling into 2017.

Obviously, as we know, that didn't happen. There were significant fee structures put in place. Almost 300 were put in place, which the response to that was that it was too much too quick. I think we're seeing the results of that in the economic indicators. You look at the budget document that was provided this year in 2017, *The Economy*, and you look at some of those economic indicators what occurred last year in the slowing economy, and even more so what's predicted this year. Which indicates that the plan that was brought in by this current administration in 2016 hasn't worked and looking forward to 2017 it's very much status quo, and status quo in regard to we've got a huge grab for cash through revenue with, I mentioned, 300 fees and various taxes. I think there was one modified in this current budget this year, which was the gas tax. Which I understand there's an enabling piece of legislation we'll have to discuss here in the Legislature as we move forward over the coming days and weeks to deal with that.

So that has caused concern and has caused huge indicators in the economy in regard to the results it's had, in regard to slowing our economy, certainly from all our demographics in our society: middle-class families, seniors, young people looking for that first job. All of those have been affected by some of the choices that have been made. That's what it's about, too. We can all differ on various approaches, but what was done before, what's done today, is all about choices. There are choices you can make in the approach you're going to take to deal with any fiscal situation. It can be balanced approach; it can be an approach where you tax and fee to the point of having negative consequences and not reaching where you want to go. So it is about choices.

I mentioned when I started about some of the positions in regard to the effects in the public service, and recognizing that because of the fiscal situation there had to be decisions made and expenditures and we need to look at those expenditures. There were 650 full-time equivalents announced that would be lost in the 2016 budget. A full-time equivalent, it's not an actual full-time position for an individual, if you will, or a position for a person. It would equate to a unit of work, which would be reflective of a 40-hour week, eight hours a day and there could be half a unit actually in a particular department or particular division which would equate to an FTE.

So very early on after the budget came down in 2016, we were asking here for the Minister of Finance to tell us what does that equate to, what are the savings that reflect those 650, and how many jobs are we talking about here. Because obviously if you bring this in, you must have done your analysis in terms of how does that 650 FTE break out into jobs in particular departments, and what are the savings for that particular year, annualized out. Because that's what you're looking at, you're looking at the full envelope of operating revenues that are required for that particular department.

We continued to ask and we received very little in terms of response to it, but eventually we put some questions on the Order Paper, asked to get some feedback on that. It was just recently we got some information in regard to – and we are not even talking about this budget, we're talking about last budget in regard to those numbers. Based on what we could tell when you broke out those 650 FTEs and they mean in regard to positions, we still question whether there's not even 200 more positions that would come out of the public service to reflect those 650 FTEs.

Again, we asked that question here in the House and I don't think it's been given to us in detail if that's concluded. There were some estimates given in regard to March of 2017, what's been concluded in that, yet it hasn't been made quite clear if that's the conclusion of it – and that's important, recognizing operations in the public service and recognizing what's reflective and going to be laid out in *Budget 2017*, because they would combine. One fiscal year would flow

into the other if you haven't done what you said you were going to do in that fiscal year.

So we certainly need that from the current administration and government to let people know. That factors into your overall budget; that's annualized in regard to savings and different issues that you're through on.

Some of the other items in the Estimates we discussed with the minister in regard to the particular budget and what's reflected in it, certainly one of them in Finance we talked about was revenue generation, one of the things that was brought in last year by the current administration with regard to the fluctuation in oil price and internationally in terms of how you predict that fluctuation in prices, what information you use, all those kind of things.

We had a discussion about that. One of the reasons we had that was because in last year's budget, the minister brought in a risk adjustment related to a barrel of oil. At that time she referenced the fact that their government would take a prudent approach and budgeted \$125 million in risk adjustment to protect against adverse impacts from commodity price fluctuation and volume.

In regard to the revenues generated, this year there was certainly a windfall that helped the current administration. I think it was almost \$400 million that was related to increased production from our oil-producing facilities offshore, as well due to a higher than what was predicted value for a barrel of oil that was predicted last year. So that helped them in terms of certainly getting and hitting their targets.

One of the other things that helped too was that for the 2016-2017 fiscal year, with this oil risk adjustment the minister referenced, they had \$125 million in as an oil risk adjustment. If it had to have been drawn down, it would have been an expense that would have been shown. Because of what happened, as I said, in regard to production, in regard to the price of oil, that wasn't used. So obviously, from a deficit reduction target, it showed us much better because that \$125 million didn't need to be leveraged in regard to if the barrel hadn't come in and what was predicted, if production had

fallen off for some reason. So we are certainly in a much better state.

The interesting thing when it was presented was that it's volatile, internationally, in terms of predicting this. I know there were 14 so-called experts, I think we call them – if they are or not, I'm not really sure – in regard to predicting that data and analysis as to where oil prices were going to go in the future, in the current year and certainly future years. That's used by all governments in terms of predicting what you're getting in oil revenues, how you factor that into your budget and where it goes.

Interestingly enough, I think we ATIPPed who was being used by the current administration, and I think basically it's the same. So there were 11 international folks, firms that do this work. Basically it was the same firms that were used by our administration that is used by the current administration in providing that highly technical data to predict where oil prices would go.

Last year in the budget forecast 2016-2017, they had \$125 million in for oil revenue risk adjustment. In 2017-2018, there's no oil risk adjustment for this particular year. You go to 2018-2019, there's \$50 million; 2019-2020, \$80 million; and it continues to go further into those years to that five-year period.

So the question would be – and as they say, details have been scanty. Last year they had \$125 million in. This year they budgeted nothing, but for the next five years there's a risk adjustment for oil in the budget. Nothing has magically changed in this particular year in regard to the volatility of oil, in regard to production, in regard to OPEC, in regard to non-OPEC members and whether they're going to produce more or going to produce less, whether shale gas and oil is going to affect it; but, amazingly, in this particular year there was no oil risk adjustment put in. Even though there was one last year, and after this current fiscal year there are ones put in for the next five years.

Obviously, we know that, if you put it in, it's going to affect your deficit target. So if you had to put in \$125 million this year or had to put in \$50 million, it would certainly affect your deficit target that you're setting. We're just wondering why that would be. It's hard to figure because

the world price of oil and the variables that affect that and change it haven't changed. They are what they are. The world is what it is and oil and gas pricing certainly is what it is.

That's something that we wonder about in regard to why that would be and what the economic strategy is there. It seems hard to understand why you would budget an oil revenue risk last year, \$125 million, and this year nothing, and the next five years you're going to budget it again. That's certainly an issue that came up as well.

One of the other things I wanted to reference as well is I heard the hon. Member up earlier and he mentioned the fact of relationships with Ottawa and that type of thing. At times, we've had in our history since '49 good relationships. Other times not so good, but it was always about putting the interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first.

It doesn't matter what political strip was in office. Most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians support leaders and parties that approach the perspective that we're Canadians. We're part of this great federation, but, as well, as a provincial jurisdiction and one of 10 provinces in the great federation, we certainly deserve to get the benefits for being part of Canada.

We've given a lot to Canada and we expect our fair return back. No more than anybody else in this federation, but that we get our return and what's important to us. Whether it's the fishery, whether it's development of our offshore resources, whether it's things like the Atlantic Accord that there were negotiations with to make sure that the revenues to us is similar to if they were on land in Alberta. That was the whole intent of the Atlantic Accord.

There were difficult days with that, but at the end of the day it was negotiated and the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I believe in the long term, were served. Because we had the start of a new industry that continues to bring great wealth to us today and I believe will in the future as well.

One of the things we've heard in the past while from the current administration is the extra input we're getting from the federal government in

regard to dollars. Now, I recognize that the current administration in Ottawa has put vast amounts of dollars into various programs. We'll be getting that on a per capita basis I assume, as any other envelope that we would get, and that's important.

One of the things we talked about in terms of our fiscal situation was equalization, and asked the question, why haven't we even had the discussion? We hear on the other side, you didn't do anything about it when you were there. Well, that's inaccurate because there was always a First Ministers' Conference.

In 2012, I think it was, Prime Minister Martin at the time asked Finance Ministers from across the country who were meeting somewhere in Canada for input into the renewal for the equalization which was coming up in 2014. That input was given, and the government of the day at the time brought in, I think it was Minister Flaherty at the time who was Finance Minister in the Harper government, basically rolled over the current equalization program, adopted pretty well what was in place with very few minor changes and rolled forward.

That's the prerogative, I guess the way it works with the federal government because it is their program. They can ask for input from provincial jurisdictions. They can listen, they cannot listen, but at the end of the day it's up to them to roll it over and that's what they did. There was representation made, but they decided they were going to pretty well keep it the way it is and roll it over.

Much like what happened with the Health act or the Health and Social transfers that the current administration were involved with just a little while ago with the federal government, where traditionally it had been 6 per cent renewal in regard to increasing health and the Harper administration said 3 per cent. The current Trudeau administration said they weren't going to go with 3 per cent but at the end of the day they did, and they basically decided.

All the First Ministers went up and had a meeting. They were all pretty adamant they weren't going to sign on for 3 per cent. They didn't want it. Well, guess what? The federal government decided this is what we're going

with, you're getting 3 per cent, they signed off, here you go.

Now, a lot of the First Ministers, ours included, decided they weren't going to buy into that. They were going to stand strong. They were going to fight the federal government. Lo and behold, a few days after they were out of the room. They were all lined up, they were signing up for 3 per cent.

So I'm just making the comparison, equalization is the same thing. Representation is made, you hope they listen, but if they don't, well, it's the federal government's call.

Now, in regard to the overall equalization policy and formula and how it's – I think most recognize that changes need to be made when you look at the demographics, when you look at the fiscal cap, the fiscal capacity, various components and how when it was originally designed it doesn't meet the needs of the various regions of the country today.

In particular, a region like Atlantic Canada where some of the indicators, you look at demographics in regard to – for us, one of the fastest aging populations, what that means. If it's on a per capita basis and on population, if the health care and services which equalization is supposed to balance out across the country, if you have a higher sector to your population, as you get older, age 65, 70 and 80, and there's greater per capita expenditure on health care, from an equalization point of view that needs to be recognized and tied into the formula in regard to how you deliver that service. Then you look at demographics and all of those kinds of things.

I just want to go back and talk about – for a second, before I clue up here – the expenditures we're getting from Ottawa and where it's coming from. The budget document, Exhibit I: Where the Money Comes From, there's a pie chart that shows where it comes from.

If you look at 2015, it was about 11.7 per cent was from the Government of Canada. In 2016, it was about 12.8 per cent. In *Budget 2017*, it's about 12.6 per cent. So it's probably gone up point nine of a per cent; yet we continue to hear that over and above the per capita spending, which is really not even reflected there, that

we're getting this enormous influx of cash from the federal – and maybe we are, but it's not demonstrated in these documents that are part of the last three budgets when you look at them and compare them. That was something as well as we went through the Estimates and looked at what was important in regard to getting our fair share and what that amount would be.

Before I clue up, I just want to mention – I think the hon. Member mentioned, too, when he was up and spoke about the fishery and some of the challenges we have. Unfortunately, when we look at some of the allocations in the current budget, this administration, I think under DFA, I think there's about \$7.4 million that we're expecting from the federal government, but that's only coming if we're able to get an agreement. That \$7 million is part of a, supposedly \$100 million, which there was supposed to be more, that was the Atlantic Canada Fund.

Mind you, the Atlantic Canada Fund was nothing we were ever part of. We had, through CETA, recognized what was coming. What we're seeing today is the downturn and a transition needed to shellfish to groundfish and had a \$400 million shared fund to help us do that.

What we see this year in the budget from the current administration, from 400 we went to 100, to \$7 million that we may get if we get some agreement as part of this process we're talking about here. In addition, we know there's a reduction in CFER. With the Marine Institute. There has been reduction there. We've heard about monies for science. We haven't seen any of it on the ground. I think they're talking about almost 10 years to get a baseline, even though we invested out provincial money into the *Celtic Explorer* to give us that base information and we're not even sure where that's to.

So, Madam Speaker, it's been certainly good to speak to Estimates, and I look for further opportunity to speak in this hon. House.

Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise here today and speak on behalf of my colleagues here on the government side and represent the good District of Baie Verte – Green Bay, and always a pleasure to do so, Madam Speaker.

I mentioned I think at the beginning of this sitting that I would continue to read a piece of writing that I read a while ago, and that was to produce a healthy province is to realize that success depends on us, as a people, possessing a real willingness to change and a desire to fight for success. One of the hon. Members had mentioned in my last opportunity to rise that she didn't want to hear that anymore, but I'll continue to read that for as long as I continue to stand.

I know that we're debating the Estimates on Government Services today. I didn't get the opportunity to rise in my chair to speak to the Estimates on – I sat on both the Social Services Committee and the Resources Committee. Certainly it was just a real opportunity to learn as a new MHA, an opportunity to see the inner workings of how these Estimates Committees meet and to discuss, and the openness and the opportunities to ask questions on behalf of our Official Opposition and the Third Party, and us sitting as Members on that side as well.

From my own perspective, I wanted to thank the Committee who sat on our Resources Committee. They were: the MHA for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, the MHA for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels, the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, the Member for Exploits and the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I had the opportunity and the privilege, obviously, to Chair that Committee.

We sat with the following departments: the Department of Natural Resources; the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour; the Department of Fisheries and Land Resource; and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

Again, Madam Speaker, I want to recognize and thank the Table staff, the Clerks and to the staff of those departments. They put in a lot of hard work to prepare these Estimates for the ministers of those departments. When you have an opportunity to go through those books, it gives you an indication of a lot of hard and good work that goes on behalf of people who work in this great Confederation Building.

Before I get into a couple of items that I wanted to speak to, again, not having the opportunity to stand last week, I certainly wanted to recognize last week, being Municipal Awareness week. I think there are lots of us in this House who probably got our start in politics from the municipal politics and town councils. I know for me, Madam Speaker, as a young deputy mayor of the Town of Springdale, I learned very early about the good work that happens in some of our town halls and local service districts as well.

I have 42 communities in my district, of which most of them are incorporated towns but we do have some local service districts. I want to commend anybody and everybody who gives up their time to put back into their communities.

I know in my own district, I'd like to recognize – we're losing a couple, actually two or three mayors who've spent in excess of 20 years in municipal politics and are leaving. Like is said, I want to throw out a bouquet to these people for giving of their time. Certainly, I want to encourage people to take a serious look at municipal politics and give back to your communities, as we all have as well.

I wanted to recognize this week, Police Week, and thank the Minister of Justice and Public Safety for inviting me to the opening of that today. I have all the respect in the world for the police services of our province, Madam Speaker, with two provincial police forces in the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I want to recognize municipal police forces, as well as military police, anybody who are in the police field.

It goes back personally for me, Madam Speaker, as I've had the opportunity and the privilege to spend some years of my life, early life, as a member of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. A very proud and time-honoured

police force and I'd be lying to you, Madam Speaker, if I didn't tell you that I miss it just about every day. Going back and seeing those officers, some of them who I had the opportunity to train with, seeing them again today in full uniform brings back great memories for me. Obviously, I certainly treasured those.

I want to talk about my meetings with the community councils that I've had an opportunity to – again, I talked about the fact that we have 42 in the district. In my 16 or 17 months in politics, I've had the opportunity to sit down with every one, I think, besides one, and that community is Brent's Cove. Actually, I had a date to meet with that council and it got cancelled on my behalf, Madam Speaker. I had an incident that happened that I couldn't miss.

But it is interesting, as we travel throughout our districts and getting sort of a feel for where we are as a district just coming new into government. We certainly listen to our friends and colleagues across the way who speak about – we are always talking about the overspending, the \$25 billion worth of oil revenue that they had come in over their 12 years of reign. I guess until you know the full story, sometimes it's hard to argue. I just go around my own district, Madam Speaker, and looking at some of the infrastructure that's in place.

We still have four communities throughout the district that are still operating with gravel roads today: Snook's Arm, Nippers Harbour, Perbeck's Cove, Tilt Cove. Those people are still travelling over gravel roads today. I've had the opportunity to visit every one of those communities and listen to the people.

Madam Speaker, I've had the opportunity to sit down with a lot of the ministers and speak to them about the district and where I see the district today and where I'd like to see the district in a couple more years. It's concerning to me.

Probably the most concerning issue I have, Madam Speaker, is water. I know in speaking with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we've had many discussions over water issues. We still have way too many – actually, one is too many, but we have way too many communities today

that are still on boil water orders. It perturbs me to no end.

When I look at having the opportunity to visit the community of Seal Cove, I took a sample back to Service NL in Springdale. I took a sample of that water. It's absolutely terrible.

Dealing with the community of Port Anson over the last couple of weeks; and I realize the time of year that we're just into a spring runoff. If there's ever a time that your water is going to be cloudy, it's at this particular point in time of the year, but there is a difference between cloudy and dirty. I would suggest, Madam Speaker, we are talking about dirty water.

The other community that I've had the opportunity to sit down and visit with was the community of Shoe Cove down near the community of La Scie. That community is experiencing severe water issues as well.

When you go home at the end of an evening or at the end of a day's works and you can sit back and turn on your taps and enjoy clean water, to be able to brush your teeth and bathe in clean water, Madam Speaker, I look at that today as a God given right. Especially in a province like Newfoundland and Labrador where we have an abundance of water and an abundance of clean water, it's unfortunate we still have communities within our districts that don't enjoy that privilege that I certainly have.

Madam Speaker, when I look at the difference – and I know one of the MHAs, one of my colleagues opposite brought that up one afternoon here in the House, about the difference between being a rural MHA and an urban MHA, and it's huge, Madam Speaker. It may have been my colleague across the way, but it's a big difference.

I leave the House here at 5:45 on a Thursday afternoon when we shut down. We have a 5½ hour trip home. It's late when we get home. Then you're trying to get a business day in the district, which is Fridays. Then Saturdays you leave for brunches, and then Sunday it's back on the road, back to the capital city. It's a huge difference.

When I represent 42 communities, I think there may be close to 30 fire departments, community councils, local service districts, it becomes a full-time job trying to be – and there are a lot of MHAs in this House, Madam Speaker, who go through the same thing every week that I do. You're trying to listen to all the issues and try and do your best to make sure that those issues that your constituents have, or communities have, get to the ears of the different departments. I thank all the ministers within our government. They're doing a great job given the financial circumstances we find ourselves – in front of them today.

Madam Speaker, you heard me talk about a couple of things in the Resources Estimates, and a couple of items I wanted to speak to actually were Natural Resources. Certainly, I'll argue with the Member for Labrador West about being the mining capital of Newfoundland and Labrador, and they are. They've done well, but I want to speak to the mining community in Baie Verte – Green Bay because we've seen many mines come and go, Madam Speaker.

Even today, people talk about their districts and the downturn in the economy. Well, I'd like to talk about the upswing in the economy in the District of Baie Verte – Green Bay. It has to do with the mining activity on the Baie Verte Peninsula and the prospects throughout our district.

We're still having a fair amount of work in the area, and a lot of drilling programs are taking place. Mining has historically been and continues to be an important economic driver for our province, and certainly for our district. It's one of the province's oldest leading industries and is a major contributor to the economy of the province.

Mining in our province has its origin, I say to the Member for Labrador West, on the Baie Verte Peninsula, and with the Dorset soapstone quarry in Fleur de Lys showing pre-European use of the geological resources of the province.

MR. LETTO: (Inaudible.)

MR. WARR: I'm just making sure you're listening to my remarks here.

The first major mining development in Newfoundland began in Tilt Cove, I say to the Member for Labrador West, in 1864. Tilt Cove is on the Baie Verte Peninsula. Actually, Madam Speaker, Tilt Cove at one particular point in time was the world's largest producer of copper. To my hon. colleagues, I don't know if you know that, but it's –

AN HON. MEMBER: What year was it?

MR. WARR: That was 1864. We had major mines in Betts Cove, and Little Bay soon followed. Then there was Consolidated Rambler Group with Rambler, Ming East, and Big Rambler Pond Mines. This is truly, Madam Speaker, the original mining capital of the province. Families here have made their livelihood from the mining industry for generations and carry on with their pride within this development.

Today our mining and mineral companies, many in the province, Madam Speaker, many of which are international, directly provide high paying jobs to more than 7,000 men and women in Newfoundland and Labrador. Despite lower commodity prices, mineral shipments are forecast to be \$2.9 billion in 2017.

The Baie Verte region is truly an example of how innovation, exploration and development of our mineral resources lead to a dynamic growing industry. I look at, right now on the Baie Verte Peninsula, Madam Speaker, directly and indirectly involved in the mining sector, I would suggest on the Baie Verte Peninsula, there are probably 400 to 500 people working within that sector. The nice thing about it, Madam Speaker, I know for a fact, speaking with my good friend, the general manager of Anaconda, he talks about the average age in that particular mine is 38 years old. When you look at that age, it bodes well for the future of the industry and mine at Anaconda.

Madam Speaker, in talking about the mining sector, I want to remind everybody about the anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Mining Conference this year, as every year it's been held in Baie Verte. This is the 30th anniversary of the mining conference. It is June 2 and 3. I'd like to invite all my colleagues to the mining conference. If you have some spare

time, I'd certainly welcome you on the beautiful Baie Verte Peninsula to the mining conference.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) not invited this year.

MR. WARR: I'm sorry?

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) not invited.

MR. WARR: Madam Speaker, I think I just heard the minister tell me that he wasn't invited, but he knows very well that he's invited.

I just wanted to highlight as well, talking about the sealing industry, when we look at our quota this year, we had a provincial quota of 450,000 seals this year. It's unfortunate, Madam Speaker, that we won't take 75,000 seals out of that quota. It's unfortunate when we look at our fish stocks. It's been the demise, really.

I listened to my hon. colleague for Cape St. Francis talk about his passion of the fishing industry; I do as well, Madam Speaker. Even the community of La Scie is the second largest long liner port in Newfoundland and Labrador. There's probably half a billion dollars' worth of seafood that comes up over that road every year.

Madam Speaker, my time is concluded. I'll get an opportunity to stand again in my place to continue the discussion on my district.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I thank the Member who previously spoke for providing an overview of some of the good things that are happening in his district. There are good things happening in just about every region of this province. We tend to focus on the negativity, some of which has been generated by the doom and gloom messages of the current government over the last 18 months; but, in reality, there are still good things happening in our communities and there are good things

happening in our economy, despite this downturn that we find ourselves in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: I think it's important from time to time to recognize that, because people are actually looking for some hope and some confidence and some reasons to believe, and some reasons to stay here and to contribute positively to life in Newfoundland and Labrador. Government has a responsibility to set the tone. While government has neglected its responsibility in that regard, it's still nice to hear individual Members of this House talk about some good things that are happening in their districts.

Speaking of which, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands earlier today had an opportunity to give a Member's statement where he recognized the students and staff and parents and volunteers and community supporters connected to primarily Mount Pearl Intermediate and Mount Pearl Senior High school. Now, at the same time, to the project that I'm going to speak about for a moment that he spoke about earlier today, it does involve several elementary schools in Paradise and Mount Pearl as well, but the bulk of the students that participate, and there are hundreds involved, come from Mount Pearl Intermediate and Mount Pearl Senior High.

The production that he spoke about and that I'll now speak about is called ETCETERA. We attended the 31st showing of ETCETERA last week. We were there on the same evening; I believe it was Thursday night. I thought he might take me to dinner before or after, but that never happened I'm sad to say, Madam Speaker.

We had a great night at ETCETERA, as we always do. Hundreds of young people in Mount Pearl, also many come from Paradise as well, participate in this annual production. The Goulding family has been instrumental in its success for over three decades. The amazing part about this musical production that I think makes it unique is that there is such large percentage of the student population involved.

It was inspiring. The energy was incredibly positive. There was a large crowd for multiple nights. A lot of effort goes into it. The students

have been practising for months. Parents have been raising money for months. It is something that involves the whole school community but also the greater communities of Mount Pearl and Paradise as well. Congratulations to all the students, the staff, the volunteers who make ETCETERA an amazing show each and every year.

So that's one little highlight from my community from the last week or so. Over the weekend, I had an opportunity to visit Parkdale Manor, a seniors' apartment building in my district. It's was built by and is still run by an independent community non-profit board that's connected to the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 36. There's a big need for affordable housing for all citizens, but, in particular, for seniors in my district and in my community. Parkdale Manor has been serving the needs of a number of residents for a long, long time.

I had a chance to chat with several of the board members: the current chair, the current treasurer and a number of other community volunteers, including Sally Seward who's our current Citizen of the Year in Mount Pearl, who in addition to her work with the legion and the Seniors Independence Group, also volunteers with Parkdale Manor. An incredible commitment and I know that the residents of Parkdale Manor benefit greatly from the work of those volunteers and from the support that's provided by the legion.

Earlier this winter, we had the unfortunate occurrence of a flood that happened at Parkdale Manor. The building is now – I don't know exactly how old it is, but it is several decades old now at this point. Despite the efforts that have been made over the years to upgrade roofing and plumbing and heating and electrical and windows and other elements of the building, the building in some ways is still showing its age. It's an older building.

There was some copper piping that failed over the winter and led to a flood that destroyed several apartments. Fortunately, the community rallied and responded. We had several seniors who were effectively homeless. It took several days to come up with solutions, but I have to acknowledge that through the office of the minister responsible for housing, we were able

to ultimately get some support and arrange for temporary housing for these seniors who were displaced and left homeless for several weeks. It was about six weeks that they were out of their homes.

I want to acknowledge Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and the minister responsible for the assistance that was provided to these individuals who were in need. It took some time to get government's response sorted out. In the meantime, there were a number of community groups that rallied to offer some help and support.

The Mount Pearl Lions Club showed up to cook meals for seniors who had been displaced. There were other organizations and individuals in the community who showed up with gift cards, who showed up to help move furniture. A member of Mount Pearl council, Councillor Ledwell, showed up to help move people's belongings out of the apartments so that repairs could start as quickly as possible.

I want to recognize one resident of Mount Pearl in particular, Joyce Bannister, who is a resident of the District of Mount Pearl – Southlands, but somebody who I've known for a number of years and is actually the daughter of the late Fred Bannister, who was a long-time member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 36, a long-time member of Mount Pearl council, one of the founding members of the Mount Pearl Seniors Independence Group and a long-time chairman of the board of Parkdale Manor.

When Fred got sick and he later passed away, prior to his passing he asked that his daughter step up and fill his shoes and make sure that Parkdale Manor was looked after, and she's done that in fine form. She's not the chair of the board. I believe she's the treasurer currently, but she's very active in making sure that the building is maintained. She's been able to secure some funding to get an elevator installed and to upgrade the electrical even further, and the piping I referred to that was problematic earlier this winter. She's one example of the kind of dedicated volunteers that make non-profit housing work. We need more of it.

I think it's good that government has programs, through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing

and other government agencies, to support that. There's a great need. We need to do even more in that area to make sure there are a variety of different options and a variety of affordable options for people who are struggling to find suitable housing.

I want to thank Joyce for her efforts, and all the volunteers and community supporters who rallied to help when Parkdale Manor was in crisis earlier this year. I had a chance to visit this weekend, as I said, tour the facility to see the results of the renovations and improvements.

The apartments that were full of water and not in very good shape when I saw them last are now in top shape. They look like new. The seniors living there are quite pleased with the results. While upcoming renovations and improvements will cause a little bit of further disruption, they're quite happy with how things have turned out over the last few months.

I will now shift. Now that I've talked about a couple of things going on in my District of Mount Pearl North, I'd like to shift and talk a little bit more about budget. I've had a chance to take part in this budget debate – I want to say half a dozen times. It's probably not a half dozen yet, but it will be before it's all over. At every opportunity I've wanted to get up and talk about some of the issues in this budget and how they affect people.

We received some criticism from the government for making reference to last year's budget, but, Madam Speaker, I would argue that they're very much one and the same. There are some things that are slightly different. The communications and messaging around this year's budget was given a lot more careful thought after the disastrous performance last year, but the disastrous decisions that impact people's lives, that impact families, that impacted seniors last year are virtually all in place once again this year. So I do want to spend some time talking a little bit about that and the impact of this year's budget on people, on our families, on our communities as well.

We heard the Premier making some comments in Question Period about oil and the impact of oil on our economy. The improved deficit position that we see this year, which is one of

the differences from last year, is actually a direct result of increased oil revenue and oil production, about \$400 million.

While I would have thought that this government would be eager to tackle spending and to deal with some of the challenges we face to get us to a more sustainable position fiscally in light of the current unique circumstances we find ourselves in, instead we haven't seen any real effort to address the spending issue. We've got a government that has spoken very negatively about oil but is very quick to take credit for improving the deficit this year, which is simply a result of increased oil revenue and production.

Time after time the Liberals have spoken. Even today in Question Period the Premier talked about not relying on oil but once again, their actions say differently. They're leaning heavily on oil revenue to balance the books. We are very dependent on oil revenue. It would be great and we need to continue to work to get to a point where we are less dependent on oil revenue, but we are in the oil business. It does contribute greatly to our economy and we need to manage that well.

Other revenue the Liberals have generated was a result of increased taxes that were introduced in last year's budget. Personal income tax I believe this year, the increases will have an impact of \$182 million; corporate income tax, another \$37 million. So the Liberals have downloaded the fiscal burden directly on people. This hasn't changed. That was the case in *Budget 2016*, that's the case in *Budget 2017*. In fact, other than bringing a huge cloud of darkness over the province, as I alluded to earlier, we've seen very little progress since the Liberals have formed government.

The budget we saw last year hit every person. The budget we saw last year and again this year hit every family, every business in the province, over 300 taxes and fees that were new. In *Budget 2017*, we only saw a partial reduction in one of these taxes. Every family pays more to live and work in this province because of the higher taxes and fees that the Liberals have introduced.

It was just this weekend I talked to yet another young family. Two professionals, both with university education, both with good jobs in this region contributing to our economy who are in the process of seeking work in another Atlantic province because they no longer feel there are good opportunities for them here to continue to grow their family and to lay down roots and to build a future here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm hearing that sentiment more and more.

After all the work that was done to encourage people to choose to live here, to stay here, to come here, to invest here, to build a career here, to build a future here, it's really disheartening what we've seen on the part of government over the last 18 months.

People are still paying the price for the Liberal's last budget. We see increases to personal income tax; increases to corporate tax; increases to the HST, which they promised they wouldn't increase; increases to retail sales tax; tobacco tax, if unfortunately you're a smoker; increases in the insurance tax, which we talked about in Question Period today as well; and, of course, the famous Liberal levy.

For many of us, those hits – some of us are faced by all of those hits, and that's had a drastic impact on people's household income. That's had a dramatic impact negatively on people's ability to live here successfully and work here successfully.

The Liberals say no new taxes this year, when in fact increased taxes and fees from last year are still in place. Almost all of them, with the exception of one, the gas tax which has been reduced partially. The fact is that people in this economy, and the economy itself, are struggling. The Liberal budget has done nothing to take off some of that pressure; 299 fees and taxes remain in place, new ones on top of the pre-existing ones.

Liberals asked taxpayers to dig deep into their pockets last year and there's been no change this year. In fact, the full effect of some of those hits from last year is now being fully felt in 2017.

The government in its Throne Speech and in its budget likes to talk about difficult choices; but,

unfortunately, this is not a government that's made any. The people have had to make difficult choices but the government has not. If you look at the decisions and actions over the last 18 months, we have a government that can't be trusted. That's a really unfortunate circumstance for people of this province to find themselves in.

I think we need this government to somehow realize that taking money out of people's pockets won't drive the economy; it won't contribute to economic growth. In fact, we now have an economy, the only economy in the country that's in a recession, and that was avoidable. There is a better way for government to govern and provide the leadership that's needed to spark economic growth.

One of the big concerns I continue to have with this budget, even having listened to hours of budget debate and followed media stories and listened to ministers promote their budget and others deliver speeches with the key messaging about the budget, there are just so many things that are not known yet. There are so little details contained in the budget documents that it causes us to question: What are they not telling us?

We've raised lots of questions, but we continue to struggle to get some of the answers that we need to be able to know fully what the impact of this budget is going to be on people of the province.

Just to give you a couple of examples to illustrate that, Madam Speaker. The budget this year talks about \$283 million in savings but can't provide the details of where the cuts are coming. Some of them we've already seen, but there clearly has to be more to come based on those numbers. They identify the \$73 million will be coming out of agencies and boards and commissions, entities attached to government outside of the line department, but won't provide the details on that.

The Minister of Finance on Budget Day stated that they're looking for efficiencies but was unclear about what that might mean. So we do have reason to be concerned. It's great that there are going to be some savings, but we need to see the details on where those savings will come from. Where are the increased revenues coming from on top of all the increased taxation we saw

last year that continues this year? Where are those efficiencies going to come from? Unfortunately, the government is unprepared to give us any answers.

On further reductions, the Minister of Finance essentially said: When we make those decisions, we'll let people know. A few weeks ago, right after budget, prior to the Estimates meetings, the minister said just ask your questions in Estimates, which is insulting, I think, to any Member of the House of Assembly and to the people of the province.

Well, we've been through all those Estimates meetings and we still have lots of unanswered questions. There were some ministers, I will acknowledge, who were at least willing to answer questions and provide some clarity on their departmental budgets, but there were others who were evasive and arrogant and dismissive and condescending, which is tone that we see more and more from this current administration.

So we have a lot of reason to be concerned. There's a lot of uncertainty around what's coming next. We haven't seen the stronger tomorrow or the way forward that the Premier and the Liberal government keep promising. Trust in this current Premier and this current government has long been broken. While people are looking for hope and confidence and a clear plan and a leader they can trust, the Liberals continue to come up empty time and time again.

Where is the focus on people? I don't believe people will forget some of the promises that have been made just 18 or 19 months ago; promises of no layoffs; promises of no HST increase; promises to be more open and transparent than ever before; promises that their captains of industry will deliver a LEAP plan; all of which proved to not be true.

The Way Forward is actually moving us backward; it's taking the province in the wrong direction. I recall some of the newspaper headlines in the week around the budget. One was Throne Speech looks backward, not forward; one talks about job cuts in health care; one talks about celebrating the small successes in coming out of *The Way Forward* document illustrating that it was nothing more than a

feeble attempt at a PR exercise. People deserve better than all of that.

The Way Forward that the Liberals describe is taking us in the wrong direction. The Liberals have chosen to smother business and erode business confidence and make it more difficult for the economy to thrive. The Liberal government's mandate is to strengthen the province, not to devastate it and we're seeing the effects as being very devastating on our province.

It's time to give people some comfort, some relief and some truth. Give people the details to support the decisions that have been made in the budget and give us the full story on this year's budget that we're presently debating in the House of Assembly.

People deserve better. We're confident there's a better way. Like many people in the province, we don't have confidence in the leadership of this government. We have many unanswered concerns and questions about this budget and we will continue to ask them, we will continue to raise them as long as time permits in this House during the budget debate.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I had several pages of prepared notes here about the good things and investment coming out of *Budget 2017*, but it's always entertaining to follow the Member for Mount Pearl North who raises a different view of the world from that you see on this side. I understand that. That is the role of Opposition. I have to say one of the things that the Opposition and the Third Party have managed to do is manufacturer doom and gloom where maybe less actually existed if you look at the reality.

It's interesting to study people's speaking styles. I notice we started off with, what was called in

my day, damning by faint praise; a little bit of a congratulations or a half-hearted compliment to kind of throw you off and, as you say, suck you in. It's interesting as the thrust of the last 20 minutes developed, when you realize that there are all sorts of logical inconsistencies in the world view that was put forward from the opposite benches.

It's interesting that, on the one hand, we've just come through an Estimates process which, for some of us, lasted well in excess of the three hours and others ended fairly promptly on time. I think it would be fair to say that from my personal view of Estimates, there wasn't really any question on numbers that was left unanswered.

So when the Member opposite says we can't find it, maybe you either didn't ask the right questions or didn't understand the answers you were given. Quite honestly, I think there are some concept issues that need to be fleshed out. The longest one that we had in Estimates for Health and Community Services lay around the concept of zero-based budgeting.

The idea that you start with a blank sheet and say what is the core purpose of this person, this department; how much does that cost to provide. I think we went into some significant detail. We talked of 55 landlines that are gone, 30-odd Blackberries that weren't needed and voicemails that had been removed from the system.

I think it was at that point that there was a glazed look from the opposite side of the House because the concept didn't register. They could not understand the fact that we didn't go and say, well, everybody in the department has to have a Blackberry because they're a government employee. We said: What does your job entail? Does somebody need to call you or email you at 7 at night or 3 on a Sunday morning? If the answer is no, why have you got a Blackberry? We repatriated over 30 –

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. HAGGIE: Thirty, and that's anywhere from \$35 to \$50 a month.

Same with landlines; we discovered we had a whole host of landlines nobody ever called.

They were never used for outgoing calls, so 50 of them went. This concept didn't seem to register. I think, quite frankly, we're accused of arrogance, but because the Opposition, when they were in government, couldn't register the idea, couldn't get it to work, it could not be done. They couldn't do it; nobody else could do it. The fact of the case is that we've done it. We have done it.

Again, it's the difference between ideas, plans and some action. We've heard that consistently from the folk on the opposite side. The PC Opposition claims credit for an idea that this side of the House has actually got off its bums and implemented, and somehow that's our fault, not theirs.

Again, their sort of diversity of views – there is talk about spending cuts and, on the one hand, the Member opposite argues there are no cuts and, on the other hand, he says that simply maintaining existing expenditure in Health is a 5 per cent or a 6 per cent cut, which depends on which way the wind blows and how his math works. I don't understand it, and he's never been able to explain it.

Again, I go back to the fact that we had three hours sitting in this House where questions around numbers, questions around dollars were asked and answered. If the information wasn't readily available, which is really unusual for my staff because I have to say, they are extremely well prepared and know their stuff. There was no question that that information was then going to be presented to people. The facts of the case are it doesn't fit their narrative, so you don't hear about it. It doesn't fit their world view.

Again, I refer to taxes. On the one hand the Member opposite says this government has made no hard choices, yet on the other hand we've put taxes there. There are 200 or 300, or whatever the number of the day happens to be, and somehow this is reflective of us not having a plan or knowing what we're doing.

We made some very difficult choices in budget '16. We didn't like them; nobody liked them. You go back to that day and recall how that budget was received by this side of the House. It was a solemn occasion, but the fact is, we were in a very sick financial situation and,

unfortunately, we needed some fairly nasty tasting medicine. A bit like that cough medicine: It tastes awful but it works. It has worked from \$2.78 billion – our Buckley's has you down to less than \$800 million. We set \$800 million as a target, we delivered less than that. Those are the results of responsible, difficult decisions.

That deals with some of the issues, to some extent that the Member opposite raised. Again, just to flick to this budget, which is what we're supposed to be talking about today, we were constrained. Unfortunately, again, they don't want to hear it, but we were constrained by circumstance whereby we had a huge financial hole.

I've said it in this House before and I'll say it again. The level of personal debt that that government, that PC Opposition when in government, had incurred was well in excess of \$27,000 for every man, woman and child in this province. That's just to keep the lights on.

By comparison, Venezuela, with a personal per capita debt of \$23,000, and Puerto Rico with \$21,000, have essentially declared bankruptcy. Nothing happens for 12 hours in Venezuela. The lights go off. The patients are left in a hospital bed with no treatment. Everybody goes home. That's the situation there.

By some responsible, hard decisions, we have remedied the situation. We've plugged the hemorrhage, we've stopped the leak. What the folk on the other side refuse to grasp, arcane as it may sound, is the only way we were able to keep going was to stabilize with borrowing. The only way we were able to borrow at a rate that we could afford was actually to show an implementation, a plan that was going to stabilize the fiscal situation. Facts of the case are that has happened. We've moved through a year. We have reduced our borrowing requirement for next year significantly, and we got through it with minimal fuss from the bond-rating agencies. We don't need to get into the detail.

The problem with going into the detail is you lose most people, because I didn't understand the financial situation where governments have to borrow money. But our math seems to be holding up compared with some of the fictitious numbers that we've seen generated in previous

budgets, 2015 and 2013, about funds that don't materialize, about money that's written on a piece of paper, about costings for hospitals which were written on the back of an envelope and then turned out to be a factor of eight or nine below what any reasonable construction company would suggest.

I think really you have to take into account the fact that our manoeuvres over the last two budgets have been severely, severely constrained but there's been a huge sea change between budget '16 and budget '17.

The Members opposite argue that it's steady as she goes and same as. To an extent it is steady as she goes. We made some difficult decisions. We need to reap the benefits of those. It's pain now maybe, but the gain will be colossal because my grandson will not have to pay the debt they generated. That's important.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: Except for Muskrat Falls.

MR. HAGGIE: Well, there's another problem, and we will deal with it because we have an approach and we're already taking steps, not just to deal with the current situation but to mitigate problems that anybody with half a brain can see coming down the road, rather than sticking your head in the sand and hoping it will all blow over by the time you're voted out of office, which is what happened for the last five years prior to 2015.

Some features from the budget, and I'm going to speak from a health perspective. I always find it a challenge when I do get an opportunity to speak in the House with some leeway because I do feel sometimes that my portfolio being the way it is doesn't leave me an awful lot of scope to plug my own district.

So before I go on to talk about some of the good things that are coming through the Health and Community Services budget for this year, I'd just like to take a moment to highlight some of the things that this government is doing for my own district. It's a different kind of district. You can drive from one side of it to the other in just about an hour. It's five communities; it's linked

by the Trans-Canada Highway to all except Benton which is a kilometre or so off. It's a different kind of environment. It encompasses traditional forestry and non-traditional aviation.

AN HON. MEMBER: A great mayor.

MR. HAGGIE: Yes, a great mayor. Not quite the longest serving, I gather. That, I think, goes to Crow Head. Somebody corrected me, who's been there for over 50 years or something. Yeah, I don't think Claude could quite compete with that.

It's a non-traditional base. It is a military base. It's the largest Canadian Rangers group in the country. It has the longest airport in Atlantic Canada and if you look at the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation's plan within the framework of *The Way Forward*, this is destined to be promoted as a centre for excellence for aerospace and for aviation, building on some excellent threads with the College of the North Atlantic and its aviation mechanical engineer program, and the entrepreneurs we have within and around the airport itself.

We have a business there that has generated significant interest from Air Canada and is now the Canadian place for Air Canada to have its Pratt & Whitney turboprop engine serviced across the country. It's also doing all the major teardown and maintenance for Air Georgian. These are little stories that are generated by a few people with co-operation from the community, and I don't get an opportunity really to sing their praises or to highlight those as often.

The big thing that has actually put Gander more on the map in the consciousness at the moment of course is the success of *Come From Away*. I see that the town has actually got a *Come From Away* tourism lady now who is going to start doing tours around Gander and the local neighbourhood culminating with a free after-dinner speech from Mayor Elliott as far as I can recall.

It always is a challenge to highlight some of the good things, there's the birch sap entrepreneur up at Home Pond, and there are all sorts of other bits and pieces. I wouldn't like people to go

away thinking that I've not been actively involved in a lot of that. Really, I have to say, there's so much energy in my district in terms of trying to create these opportunities that it's actually difficult to cram it into a short period of time and cover all the other things because I think there is a certain set of misinformation that I rarely, as a minister, have to correct – again, building on some of the selective interpretation of Estimates and budget that I've heard manifest even as recently as this afternoon.

Health and Community Services has a huge infrastructure deficit going back over years. Successive generations of governments have ignored all but critical maintenance. We're able to allocate \$43 million this year for critical projects, but that again is not where, ideally, I would like to be. But I go back to the fact that we're constrained because of the abysmal fiscal hole that the PC Opposition dug us into over the last 12 years. Ironically, at a time when we had the greatest revenues from oil – again, a fact that they seem to omit when they talk about it.

We have allocated money both for the new hospital in Corner Brook – another promise that was long neglected for seven years – and also for Corner Brook long-term care. I mention those two together because the route that is gone with that, with a partnership with consortia actually has a whole series of benefits that relate to my comment about infrastructure, if nothing else. Contrary to misinformation put out by the Opposition and the Third Party, when the Department of Health, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, receives the keys to those buildings, they will own them, from the get-go.

At the end of the 30 years, which is the length of this arrangement, that building will be up to code and, effectively, functionally brand new. So for 30 years built in to this cost, we actually do not have to worry about major repairs and renovations. We have guarantees and we have a budget built into it which is fiscally prudent and sensible.

We are now in a transition period. We have allocated more money this year, \$4.6 million, to look at long-term care for Central. That is the next pressure point. It's an area where we have longer wait times than anyone would like, and

it's an area that has not kept up with attention, shall we say, in terms of long-term care. And that will be remedied. It will meet the needs of the Central Region.

I think once we've done our due diligence and received the advice from experts we will have a plan to bring back to the people of the province in the near future, which will address the practicalities, and also the distribution of beds. Because one of the challenges Central Health has is that outside of the Big Land, it is actually physically, the biggest geographical area for an RHA. It runs all the way from Fogo Island to Sagona Island, and from scenic Green Bay all the way out to essentially the borders of Terra Nova and Clarenville.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not as big as Labrador.

MR. HAGGIE: It is not as big as Labrador, and I will not argue that at all. However, for us, it has a problem with long-term care and Labrador has had some of that managed to a point.

Outside of Health, again just circling around, we have been able to leverage federal funds for a project in Gander which is the much-needed Magee waste water sewage plant. I was going to say it had become a sore point, but maybe a smelly point is probably the more accurate descriptor of it, particularly if the wind is blowing in a certain direction on a hot, humid day.

The fact is the town has outgrown the capacity of the plant. Whilst the town has done sterling work to remediate that, which basically consists of sucking the top of the tanks and dumping it somewhere, that will not last forever. We have, again, managed to leverage federal funds – something the previous crowd seemed to regard as beneath them – and the town will chip in north of \$11 million and so will the province, but with the federal government producing the lion's share to enable that to continue. Because of the geography in Gander, it's the only way that development can expand in the town, and that town has grown significantly according to the recent census.

Moving away a little bit from infrastructure to talk about program and services, I think I just got time really to highlight the next investment

in those things that we see coming, and that will be the implementation plan from the All-Party Committee on Mental Health.

The recommendation from the Committee was a plan by the end of June. That recommendation will be met. Government, in this year's budget, has actually set aside a sum of money, \$5 million, for that to be implemented. In addition, we have some unconditional money from the federal government, just for this year, which will amount to about a third of their annual mental health money. We have yet to complete and finalize our agreement with the federal government on how the rest of it will be spent over the subsequent 9½ years, and that's \$2.7 million.

It will be enough to start and enough to begin to implement. It will not fix mental health and mental health and addictions. Another of the recommendations is to shift the funding in health around to make sure mental health gets its fair share in line with other jurisdictions.

I think, Mr. Speaker, as my time draws to a close, I would just like to cycle right back to the beginning and say that really it is disingenuous – seems to be the word for this session – of the Opposition to fear monger and make hay out of information they either refuse to understand or misrepresent in ways that serves their purpose. I would commend this budget and I will be voting for it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I'm quite pleased to stand this afternoon and speak to our final Concurrence debate, the Concurrence of the general government sector and legislative branch. I was pleased once again to be on that Committee and take part in the various Estimates discussions that we had with the various departments. We still have a few left that would be happening in Committee of the

Whole, but for the most part we have covered the general government sector.

I'm happy to stand again to speak to the doubled-faced budget that we have, a budget that in the Budget Speech was one thing, but in the reality when you dig down and look at all of the things that are in the budget and things that remain from 2016 is another reality.

We actually have a two-faced budget, so I find it rather interesting to hear the Minister of Health and Community Services talk about people on this side of the House being disingenuous. If anybody is being disingenuous, it's the government side of the House, Mr. Speaker, certainly, in the way in which the Minister of Finance presented in her Budget Speech something that was completely unrelated to the reality of what we're dealing with. If you want disingenuous, Mr. Speaker, that's disingenuous.

In her speech, one of the things the Minister of Finance said was that government was taking an evidence-based approach to managing the province's finances, the implication being that anything they were doing in the budget was going to be evidence-based. That became sort of the buzzword for the budget, the buzzword that government was using.

Now, I notice they're not using it quite as much lately, but it's still there. It's still coming out. What we don't hear from them is: What was the evidence for the decisions that they made that are affecting the lives of people in this province? What was the evidence in 2016 for all the cuts that were made by this government, cuts that have continued?

We cannot talk about 2017 budget without referring to 2016 budget, because basically 2017 maintained that terrible budget of 2016. The government says they found it so hard to bring that budget forward. They knew that people would find it hard and they weren't happy about doing it, but they kept it. So if they were so unhappy about what they did in 2016, why didn't they come up with a plan for 2017 that would try to undo some of the damage that they did.

When we talk about evidence-based, I want us to look, Mr. Speaker, at some of the cuts that did

take place in the 2016 budget and look at where was the evidence for what government was talking about. Where's the evidence that things they did in 2016 were good things to do. Where was the evidence that these were right things to do? This is what I want to ask this government.

I'm looking at some of the cuts that took place under departments that were related to the general government sector. Under Finance, for example, because the Department of Finance comes under this, one of the things they did in 2016 was to eliminate the Home Heating Rebate Program. Mr. Speaker, there was all kinds of evidence that was a really popular program because there were so many applications for it that partway through the year, every year, all of the money was used up. People really needed this program. People really used this program.

I would like to know: What was the evidence that said to this government that nobody was going to be hurt by cutting the Home Heating Rebate Program? What was the evidence to say to them this was an all right thing to do? If they were going to be so evidence-based, show us the analysis that showed people weren't going to get hurt by this, or is it they don't care that people are being hurt? That's what one has to conclude, because no matter what they hear, no matter what they hear from us here in this House, no matter what they hear from the public, they justify all of it and call us disingenuous for speaking to these issues and bringing them forward.

Let's look at something like the Parental Benefits program, Mr. Speaker. A program that was brought in before this government, but in last year's budget the Progressive Family Growth Program and the Parental Support Benefit were the two things that together were known as the Parental Benefits program. Effective April 15 last year, they were eliminated.

Now, the government might say – although they haven't said anything, so we don't know. They might say these programs really weren't effective and that the goal of one of those programs, one in particular, the \$1,000 that was being given to people when a couple became pregnant, or an individual became pregnant, that really wasn't effective in helping our population

grow. Surely, once this program was brought in, we needed to look at more than, is it helping the population grow? Did we have it in place for a long enough period to make the decision whether or not its goal was being met?

What was really difficult last year was they made this announcement in the budget, it was going to be effective April 15, and no evidence, that I could tell, that this was going to be done without hurting people and really causing grief for people. Now, they did make a decision that eligible births and placements for adoption that took place on or before April 14 would remain eligible for both benefits in full. That was something. They gave a deadline for an application for people whose babies were born or adopted before April 14, 2016. However, they didn't look at what the impact of the loss of \$2,200 in that first year of having a new child, what the impact was going to be.

When this came out last year, we had many calls in our office. We had many calls from people who were really, badly impacted because they had made plans based on this \$2,200, but did that matter to this government? No, it did not matter at all. These people were doing long-term planning based on those benefits being in place.

Maybe to people on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, \$1,000 doesn't mean anything. Maybe \$100 a month doesn't mean anything, but I'm telling you that \$2,200 meant a lot to people; \$2,200 to the average person is a lot of money.

When you were talking about couples who were looking at having a second or third child – because this was there for the first year to help out, during that period of time as well when one of the parents initially, especially with the birth, the mother staying home and then after that perhaps the other parent staying home as well – that having that \$2,200 in the first year is a lot of money. Maybe to the people on the other side of the House, they've forgotten what that is. They've forgotten what the worth of \$2,200 is for the average family out there. Maybe they've forgotten, I don't know. All they could talk about was how much money they were saving.

Apparently, \$10.4 million was going to be saved annually because of dropping the parental

benefits. What was the reason they gave, Mr. Speaker? Looking for evidence-based, what was the reason they gave? This program is not offered in other provinces. Nothing about what is the difference in this province. What is the socio-economic reality in this province? What do these parental benefits mean for people in this province? It was just: oh, it's not offered anywhere else, therefore we're dropping it.

Wow, that's tremendous evidence, Mr. Speaker. That's real evidence-based decision making, I have to say. Nothing about finding out how it helped people, nothing about interviewing families who had received a parental benefit, nothing about looking at long term was this going to be effective down the road.

What would it mean to a family, what would it mean to the development of a child, even, for the family to have that \$2,200 in the beginning – none of that, Mr. Speaker. No, it wasn't happening anywhere else, therefore we're just going to drop it. I love that kind of decision making, to put it facetiously. What kind of decision making is that? And don't tell me it's evidence-based because it's not evidence-based.

Let's look at another thing that has just happened, Mr. Speaker. It has to do with family daycare and the money that was there for program start-up grants for people who were going to have family daycares in their homes. It was going to be \$5,000 for regular family daycares and \$7,500 for infant only. They dropped the program. They dropped it without any analysis, or if they did one, they certainly haven't made it public. They dropped it without looking at what the impact was going to be on daycare needs in rural Newfoundland and Labrador in particular, because that's where daycare centres in homes are more common rather than in the urban centres. No analysis of any of that. They seem to think, oh, it didn't matter to anybody.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've learned that there were close to 10 people in numerous locations around the province who had filled out the initial application and were in the process of meeting the requirements, getting a home visit, doing home renovations, buying equipment and arranging municipal and provincial inspections.

Ten – that means 10 centres; if you have four children in each centre around the province, that's an impact in the province with our small population. So all of a sudden, here they were, they had begun the process. They had filled out the initial application. Some of them were different stages along in the process and they find out that they were no longer eligible for the start-up grants.

Did they realize, Mr. Speaker, the impact of that, the hardship, the money that had already gone out of some people's pockets, expecting that they were going to get some start-up money? I can't get over the callousness of it, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, talk about disingenuous, talk about caring about child care and then pulling this kind of a stunt. If you want disingenuous, that's disingenuous. Some of these people who were facing costly renovations to bring their home up to the provincial standards for the family daycare homes will most likely pull out. Some might be able to keep pushing through and make it happen, but we're hearing that they all will not be able to and it's creating a real barrier. So then what happens is it's also going to stop new people from looking at the possibility of doing this. So what's the impact on child care especially, as I said, in rural Newfoundland?

Now, the department has decided to keep the monthly infant stimulus grant for family daycare providers, but it's only in the homes that provide for infants only. If you have a mix, if you have some who are infants and some who are a bit older, then that home will not be able to make an application.

Mr. Speaker, what sense does that make? What sense does any of this make, Mr. Speaker?

MR. KENT: None.

MS. MICHAEL: None – thank you very much, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl North – no sense whatsoever.

Where's the evidence? There is no evidence or if there is, they would have shown it to us. If there is evidence, they would have shown us to us. All they did, Mr. Speaker, was put cutting programs so that they could save money ahead of the good

of the people of the province, without looking at the impact on the people of the province.

I think doing an economic analysis that was very, very short-minded, especially when it comes this second one – well both of them, the parental benefits and the family daycare. When it comes to both of these, what about the long-term impact with regard to population growth? What about the long-term impact economically of parents who would have been depending on having more daycare in their area? Maybe a mother who was going to be able to go back to work, and now saying we don't have enough spaces. So no evidence base, Mr. Speaker. It's very, very disturbing.

Let's look at some of the other things that was in this budget – and again, decisions made with no evidence base. I'm going to speak now to something that my colleague for St. John's Centre has been touching on in petitions, because she has many petitions with regard to the tax on books. Again, they eliminated the HST point-of-sale rebate on books; they imposed a provincial book tax. What was the evidence that said that was a logical thing to do? I really would like to know where the evidence is for that.

There are many aspects of this one could look at. There's the whole aspect of the fact that we have a literacy problem in this province. There's the fact that we have low-income people who really cannot afford to buy books, and if they can manage to get some, having an extra tax is now going to stop them from doing it. But let's look at the impact on our post-secondary students. Let's look at the impact on our students at Memorial University.

I've spoken to students who this year alone, in the fall, paid \$400 and \$500 tax – \$400 and \$500 tax, Mr. Speaker. We know that we have such an impact on students right now at MUN because of this government's budget, because of the disingenuous way in which they took more money away from MUN in the budget than had been expected, that there was a plan in place between Memorial University and this government, an attrition plan that had been agreed to, and the university had done its planning based on that, and then this

government reduced more than had been expected.

Talk about disingenuous. So now we see the students in our province, and we see international students and students coming from outside of our province, but especially the students in our province having to wear the decisions of this government on their backs, having to bear the extra burden because while the tuition is not going up, they have an extra levy. Maybe that's what this government wanted. They love the word "levy." They still have the levy. That still exists. They made a slight change to it. They think people are forgetting this. Mr. Speaker, that levy is still in place and people really are not able to bear it. We have people who the impact of taxes and the impact of extra fees is still being felt. What did we have happening here today in this building, with tax drivers meeting with the Minister of Service NL because they can't bear the burden of extra taxes?

Of course insurance got taxed. Everything got taxed. So talk about disingenuous, Mr. Speaker, I just love the government using –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – that phrase.

Let's think about some other things, Mr. Speaker. I just want to get my thoughts together; I'm missing a sheet, I think. Yes, here we go. Let's talk about Health and Community Services, let's talk about that because while it happens under the ministry, it happens because of the pressures from the Department of Finance and from the Minister of Finance with regard to this budget.

What was the evidence that removing drug coverage for over-the-counter drugs wasn't going to hurt the health of the people in this province? What kind of analysis did they do that would have shown them, as anybody who knows anything about health care could have told them, that would have shown them this kind of action can affect the health of people who need those drugs?

If their health is affected, guess what's going to happen? More of them are going to be getting sick down the road. So, Mr. Speaker, what kind of evidence-based analysis went into that decision? What kind of evidence-based analysis went into imposing the diabetic test strip limits below the standard in most provinces for type two diabetics who are not on insulin? If they really want evidence, the evidence says we're going to have greater health care costs because of that. The evidence says we're going to have greater health care costs because of removing the drug coverage for over-the-counter drugs. That's what the evidence says, Mr. Speaker.

What about the evidence with regard to what they did to the Adult Dental Program? The evidence is sicker people –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – and greater costs for health care.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. Member that her speaking time has expired.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly glad to have another opportunity to speak to the budget. Mr. Speaker, a couple of things beforehand. First of all, I just want to say there was a petition earlier today brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl North, on recall legislation. Just for the record, I want to say I do support what he's saying there and I really think we should be moving forward with that.

The second point, Mr. Speaker, I want to address an issue that came up today. I want to commend the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, I think is the department, today for that announcement on job coaches for supportive employment. It's something that's long overdue, certainly in our area of Visions Employment.

I've had conversations – I know my colleague for Mount Pearl North has as well – about the concerns around the low wages for job coaches and the difficulty in recruiting and retaining job coaches. This is going to go a long way, I believe, in helping with that and in providing meaningful employment opportunity for persons with intellectual disabilities in, not just my community but certainly throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Minister, good job on that; I'm glad to see you're listening on that issue and I support that announcement.

Sticking to Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, I just want to throw a few things out here just for the record, I guess. On the CNA issue, I would just say that I agree with the position that's been taken. If we have courses or programs and so on and we have low or zero enrollment; it makes no sense to continue on. Nobody wants to see any programs cut or courses cut, I'm sure, but we simply cannot afford, as a province, to be offering courses for one or two people. So, again, I would concur with the decision by the Minister of Advanced Education.

The last point I'll make in that department in terms of MUN. While it's unfortunate we've seen such a public spat, if you will, back and forth with Memorial University, again, I would have to concur that Memorial University is receiving significant subsidy from the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador. They should be held accountable. There should be more openness and transparency as to where our tax dollars are going. They should be looking from within to find savings before they start putting it on the backs of students and so on. So I would, just for the record, say I do agree with that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the budget, and I've said this before when I've spoken. There were some good news announcements in the budget. There were some good things there, and I will certainly acknowledge the good things that were there. There was some money for transition houses, student assistants, child care subsidy increases for low-income families, legal advice for victims of sexual assault and there were some investments in mental health and so on. Those were good things. I support those initiatives and I commend the government for bringing those initiatives forward.

That being said, as has been said now numerous times, the big issue is the taxation. That is the big issue, it's all the taxation. We can't pretend that *Budget 2016* didn't happen. We wish we could pretend it didn't happen. I'm sure there's an awful lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador wish that *Budget 2016* actually didn't happen because they were hit very substantially by all these increased taxes, and everybody knows that.

The Members opposite know it. They've all gotten up themselves and said these were difficult decisions. I know it was difficult decisions and they didn't like what they did and what they felt they had to do. I'm sure they didn't, but the fact of the matter is that I think where both sides of the House disagree is on the degree to which it was done.

I don't think anybody over here is going to be naive enough – I don't think we will, I know I'm not, I don't think any of my other colleagues are – to say we would have done nothing. We would have just said status quo, we're not going to raise any additional revenues. Nobody in their right mind would say that, I don't think if we're being realistic about our situation, but it was a matter of degrees. It was a matter of how far it was taken and it was a matter of how that impacted the everyday person.

There are certainly some people who can absorb it more so than other people could absorb it, and it impacted people in different ways, there's no doubt about that. For some people who are struggling as it is to keep the lights on in their home and to heat their home – and there are people going to food banks and everything else – for those people it was devastating.

We've seen increased food bank use. That's a fact. That's been put out there by the Food Sharing Association and so on. They've seen increased food bank use and that's for the people who were already on the edge, or even over the edge to some degree, who this here just hurt them even more. We've seen no relief from that in this budget. We also know there were people that perhaps could suck it up, for a better term, but it's still hurting them financially.

We've seen bankruptcies gone up in this province. We continue to hear from industry that

housing starts are down and home repairs are down and vehicle sales are down and so on. That's because people's expendable income was taken away, much of it. Some people, all their expendable income was taken. Other people, a large portion of their expendable income was taken. That's only going to result in issues in terms of businesses trying to survive. Whether it be in the construction industry or whether it be in retail or whether it be in the service industry and bars and restaurants and so on.

I've talked to people who are in that industry, have told me that business has dropped off significantly as a result of those cuts. Unfortunately, none of them were reversed. It's fine to say there are no new taxes and fees, but if you raised everything last year to, one could argue, an unsustainable level for many people and then this year you did nothing to change that, then this is just a continuation of what you've done. That's what people are upset about. That's what I think the Official Opposition and the Third Party and I am objecting to. That's why we can't support the budget.

That's not to say that everything in the budget is bad because it's not. There are some investments there in Crown lands for municipalities and Crown lands for farming. Those are all good initiatives. Nobody is going to argue any of those things, I don't think they are, but the fact of the matter is the core issue is the taxes. That's the core issue.

Now that said, again, I will commend government on taking some actions, maybe small actions but still actions. I heard the Minister of Health and Community Services, I think is the name, talking about the fact we had people with Blackberries who had no reason to use Blackberries. We had land lines that nobody used and all those types of things.

Going through that exercise of – they're referring to it as zero-based budgeting. I think it's a good idea. I think it's a great idea. We should have been doing it forever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Absolutely, we should have been doing it, and it makes sense. I support it. I'm

sure most Members over here support it too. I think they do, because it only makes good common sense. Nobody's going to argue that, I don't think.

Some of the other things that were done, looking at the management structures and so on and trying to find efficiencies. Nobody wanted to see anybody lose their job, but at the end of the day, examining it and finding ways to do things in a more efficient way, I think the general public would argue that that was something that needed to be done as well. Even though it wasn't, obviously, for those who were impacted not a good thing, but I don't think anyone would argue in general that going through that exercise to streamline things and make things more efficient is a good idea.

Now with that said, as long as it's done properly and fairly. Now, the fact that you get rid of somebody at a deputy minister's level or whatever, you get rid of say six but then you sneak in three of your friends and former candidates, now that's not good. That's not good. People do object to that. I can guarantee you, people object to that.

I'm not saying it's never been done. I'm not suggesting this is something new, because we all know those types of things have gone on for years and years and years, but the big difference is this government said we weren't going to do it. We're taking the politics out of appointments. They weren't going to do it. They were going to change things. So when it happened, it's disappointing. It's disappointing, but the fact they're going through the exercise and finding savings, that part, that's a good thing. I think, once again, people will support it in general.

What we have to get down to here, we have to keep thinking about the ordinary person who has to try to work and live, pay taxes and pay their bills, and the impact the taxation has had on them because if you think about it, it's not just this taxation. You have to remember, people got hit with all these taxes. Now they just got hit with 9 per cent, and that's got nothing to do with Muskrat Fall. That's 9 per cent going on their light bill on top of that.

Plus, if you talk to anybody – I don't know if anybody has talked to constituents or heard from

constituents about insurance costs. I certainly have, not just the taxi industry either. I'm after getting several messages from people who said when they went to renew their insurance, and they've been driving for 30 years and have no tickets, no accidents, whatever, yet their insurance rates went right through the roof overnight. Nobody can seem to understand why or get an explanation why, but it's after happening nonetheless.

On top of all the taxes, now you have 9 per cent coming on your light bill, then you have all these insurance increases. Insurance is going up through the roof. No doubt, I suggest that pretty soon the banks are going to be standing in line with their hand up looking for their turn. Just wait and see, at some point in time they're going to start raising more cost now to use the ATM machines and service charges and everything else because they have to get their profits too. It's only a matter of time, their turn is coming.

We know as the cost of everything goes up, in terms of fuel, HST and everything else, then businesses are going to start passing that on. So the price of groceries is going to be going up and the prices of other goods and services are going to go up. Everything is going up except paycheques. That's the only thing that's not going up.

If we look at the civil service now, and they're in contract negotiations, chances are – I don't know what's happening there, but it's not looking too good for them to get any increase. Usually then the private sector starts to follow suit as well. They'll say: B'y, we're in tough times and whatever, so we can't afford to give our employees a raise either.

The cost of living is going up, the cost of goods and services are going up, the light bill is going up, all the taxes are up, the insurance is going through the roof, banks are standing in line, they want to get their piece of the pie: everything is going up except the paycheques. How are people supposed to absorb it? How they are supposed to survive? That's a legitimate question. How are people supposed to survive? How is the average person supposed to survive? They're finding it extremely difficult now and it's getting worse. Somehow we have to come together and start trying to mitigate some of this stuff. We really

do. We have people going bankrupt, we have more people going to food banks and we're getting people moving out of the province.

Sometimes you hear about people moving out of the province. You hear about that and you say, nah, that's just people saying that, there's nobody really going to move. I can tell you, I'm after getting a number of emails and messages from people who are actually gone, people that are gone. They are gone to the Mainland and other people that are packing up and leaving. They're in the process of getting their homes up for sale and everything else; they're getting out of here. They're getting out of Dodge. They really are.

The more people that leave, the more our population dwindles. That's less people to pay taxes which means now the rest of us have more to pay. It's a vicious cycle we're in to, and we have to really start to look at ways to start mitigating this.

Insurance would be a good start. I think I heard the Minister of Service NL talk about they're going to be looking at the insurance system. I hope they do. I hope to God they do. I think we need to take a serious look at the insurance system.

I think the former administration at one time, many years ago, talked about getting rid of this – putting a cap on soft tissue injuries and then it kind of died on the vine. I think perhaps the legal community got all upset and started lobbying because they wanted to be able to sue people and so on. That was good business for them. I'm not sure exactly what happened there, but it's time to have a look again, to start moving to a new system of insurance to try to get the rates down because that's another big burden on the average person.

We have to start thinking in terms of the average person and their survival. It's fine to look at a budget, fine to look at a balance sheet, fine to look at the lenders and those institutions and bond rating agencies, that's good. Government has to do that, without a doubt they have to do that, but somewhere in that balancing act they have to also look at the financial well-being of the people of the province, the people we're supposed to all be here to serve.

Particularly the most vulnerable amongst us, like our seniors as an example. You look at the seniors, not only are they getting hit with all these increases that I've just talked about, but then they were hit with other things as well. They were hit with other things.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Yes, the Member is talking about the seniors' discount, the Enhanced Benefit. Yes, that was a good thing. For the very lowest end of seniors, yes, they got a little increase. It wasn't a big increase because you took away the Home Heat Rebate and you already had a program, but it was an increase. It was a slight increase, and that's a good thing, but it doesn't come anywhere close to making up for all of the other things. Like home care costs and all this kind of stuff, it was something that went up, over-the-counter drugs and stuff.

These are things I think is important that we have to realize. These are things we have to work to try to mitigate against, because this is having an impact on the average, everyday person in Newfoundland and Labrador, and particularly our most vulnerable.

The last thing I want to just talk about – I've got a couple of minutes – is the PPPs, public-private partnerships, and the PPPs that are being proposed for long-term care and the Corner Brook hospital, and possibly HMP and the Waterford and so on at some point, if they continue to go down that road.

I'm not against it in principle, for bricks and mortar. I don't agree with privatizing the services, but in terms of the bricks and mortar, in principle, I'm not against it. The only part, though, is that as it was proposed – unless I'm missing something. To my recollection, it said that you would look at the options, you would look at the traditional option and then you would look at the 3P option. You would weigh both options, and you would go with what option made the most sense.

That's fine, but the part that's missing is that you said that information on those options would be presented to the public before you made the decision, to be able to demonstrate that this is the right option. I haven't seen that part. It

seems like the decision is made; we're going ahead with the 3P model. But the part about presenting it to the public, demonstrating to the public this is option A, this is option B, this is why we're doing it, here's our justification, I haven't seen any justification to the public. And that's something you said you were going to do that hasn't happened. So that's the biggest problem I have.

It's almost like we're going to take their word for it – and I'm not accusing anyone of going to do anything that they would feel is not the best decision. I'm sure if they think it's the best decision, they're going to do it. But just because the Minister of Health and Community Services says, b'y, we looked at Corner Brook hospital and long-term care, and we believe, I believe that the 3P is the way to go. That's the best option; that's better than the traditional option.

Well, no offence to the minister or the Cabinet or the Premier or anyone else, but that's not quite good enough, and that's not what was promised. We need justification; show us the numbers; answer the questions as to why this is the best option. If it is the best option and it can be demonstrated that it's the best option, for bricks and mortar only, then I would have no problem supporting it if it could be shown. But it's kind of hard to support it when you don't know. Just take our word for it, that's the best option.

We know what's happened in the past. We know what's happened with the Muskrat Falls Project when people are saying, trust me. Take our word for it; we're the experts. We know where that's gotten us. We've got to be able to learn from our past, and that's a classic example of where "trust us" gets us. So I'd like to see those numbers and that justification before we move forward with those projects.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What an honour again it is to rise in the House of Assembly on behalf of those who I represent, have the great privilege to represent, in Placentia West – Bellevue. It's a busy time of year in my district, as many would know. If you watch the news, and I would hope most Members do, you see that the Hebron platform is awaiting tow out now out of Bull Arm, out of Sunnyside area. We're very proud of all the work that is undergone there and by all the people of the province.

I was there not long ago, myself and the Member for Terra Nova, along with the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources. We had a wonderful pre-tow out celebration. That is indicative of the positive things that are happening in the province, Mr. Speaker. As I look across the way, all I see is negativity, all I see is mismanagement and negativity, I should say, because I'm brought to recollections of the previous administration when so much was squandered.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to stand here again today. I was up for the main motion of the budget just a few days ago last week. I only had five minutes because of course the debate was adjourning. Not to repeat myself but I just have to emphasize the points that I was making and I didn't have time to finish on.

I was talking about the ferries, Mr. Speaker. We know that my district has such a rich history of ship building. I heard the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island last week bragging about the ferries and defending the fact that they were shipped off to Romania. I just have to reiterate again, because I didn't have time to finish what I wanted to say last week, I think it's an absolute shame that Marystown was not even given the opportunity to compete and have an opportunity to build these ferries.

We saw the exorbitant costs associated with the *MV Veteran* and the *MV Legionnaire*, otherwise known as MV lemons because they're both lemons. We know now that we spent all this money going over to Romania to build these ferries that could have been done in Marystown, that could have been rendering benefits to the province and the local economy, jobs on the Burin Peninsula.

MS. P. PARSONS: Harbour Grace.

MR. BROWNE: They wouldn't have been done in Harbour Grace, I say to the Member, but you could have had some ancillary work associated with it. That's part of the package, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave is so right. Because when you have a major project in one area, there is spinoff. You take Hebron, which I just mentioned; the drilling support module was built in Marystown. The flare boom was built in Port aux Basques. The helipad was built in Bay Bulls. You see all these pieces coming together. That is the benefit, Mr. Speaker, in building local and ensuring that our local Newfoundland and Labradorians have jobs.

It was clear from the start that there was no game plan to involve Marystown in the discussions. We see this with the joint supply ships with the Navy. The former administration completely walked away from the table, Mr. Speaker; didn't want to engage the Harper government who they cozied up to –

MS. HALEY: Did not know how.

MR. BROWNE: Because they didn't know how. They were stuck on the corner of Wellington Street, Mr. Speaker, I say –

MS. HALEY: Perished.

MR. BROWNE: Perished in the cold. That is unfortunately the strategy that was employed.

To go back to the ferries, Mr. Speaker, we have the *MV Veteran*. We have the *MV Legionnaire*. The *Legionnaire* is tied up in Lewisporte, as I alluded to last week –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) spare parts.

MR. BROWNE: Spare parts for the *Veteran*, Mr. Speaker – spare parts for the *Veteran*. And how shocking is that.

We have the former minister over there sat today and his former executive assistant sat as an MHA today, they took a big trip to Romania, \$10,153.40, to negotiate terms with Damen

about the servicing of the ferries. Not to belabor my point, Mr. Speaker, not to belabor the point but if that was the intent of the trip, to negotiate the servicing of the ferries, then why are they sending pickup trucks down to Lewisporte today to get panels out of the *Legionnaire* to bring up to Farewell to put in the *Veteran*. Mr. Speaker; I have to ask these questions.

I also have to touch on the tariff – again, not to belabor the points that I made last week, but to reiterate because they're important. The poor planning that went in to those ferries – there was a \$25 million tariff that was expected to be paid. We heard many defences from the previous administration saying that because there was a sunken ferry out in British Columbia that that would be forgiven. Well, I will just reiterate to the House that without Judy Foote and our federal colleagues in Ottawa, we'd be facing a \$25 million bill.

Now, imagine if the previous administration –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: – had known, Mr. Speaker, that there would be an extra \$25 million on to the price tag, why not just add the \$25 million on to it and build it in Marystown, create local employment and spin-off benefits? No, there was no planning went into this. As someone who lives in Marystown, represents Marystown, I find it a very unfortunate train of history that comes from the previous administration on this file.

It's just one more piece of the revisionist history that we see coming from the party over there these days. I also want to make mention of something that you'll often hear me talk about here in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, but we never want the other side to hear talk about this. It's called Humber Valley Paving.

AN HON. MEMBER: What is it?

MR. BROWNE: Humber Valley Paving.

It was a \$19 million contract for the Trans-Labrador Highway and it was cancelled. March 31, 2012, the tender call for the project was

made and by March 21, 2014, there was an offer to cancel the contract, Mr. Speaker. It's an amazing turn of events. It was a \$19 million contract.

This is a copy of the Auditor General's report into this, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the inquiry that is put into Humber Valley Paving because the taxpayers of this province were absolutely fleeced by this, Mr. Speaker.

On March 13, 2014, it was a monumental day in the history of the Humber Valley Paving contract. At 8:45 a.m. there was a call put in to TW about Humber Valley Paving, and by 4:12 it was cancelled.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was just talking about ferries, which is a pretty important file in terms of jobs in the province. It's not every day you're building ferries, and they were shipped off to Romania. Marystown was not in the mix. Marystown wasn't considered. Marystown was ignored. The wonderful shipbuilding history that we have, totally not looked into, but that didn't matter, Mr. Speaker. We got a contract at 8:45 in the morning. There was one call made and by 4:12 p.m. a letter from the department was sent to Humber Valley Paving offering to terminate the contract.

Who was involved with that? The leadership contender for the Progressive Conservative Party – this is ridiculous. This is banana republic level, Mr. Speaker, and I'm shocked. Not only did they cancel the project, but there was a decision made by the former administration not even to call in the \$9.5 million bond that was available to them. We had small businesses left on the hook, many in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Mr. Speaker, that were left on the hook because of political expediency and a desire to seek a termination of this contract because it was politically convenient at the time because they couldn't scrape together anymore leadership contenders.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I won't belabour this point either, but this is something we're watching very closely, that the people of the province are watching very closely. I can assure you we will continue to watch this closely as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to talk about the past too much here today. I want to talk about the future. We know there is a revisionist history emerging from the Opposition benches. We know we have to combat the misnomers coming from the other side with facts and truth.

We heard the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands just moments ago talking about seniors in the province, neglecting to mention, neglecting to celebrate the Seniors' Benefit, the increases to the Seniors' Benefit and the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement. This is \$120 million investment that I fully support, that I fully believe is right to do, Mr. Speaker, because the seniors of our province are those who built this province and now it's up to us to support them.

This is something the Opposition apparently doesn't support. We know the Seniors' Advocate, another measure we have taken to strengthen the role of seniors in our society, it was labeled a luxury by the Opposition at one point and this is just the tip of the iceberg, Mr. Speaker. It is concerning to say the least, but I can say with all honesty that when I travel through my district – which I do every weekend when the House is not sitting – I can tell you I'm very proud to look senior citizens in the eye and say that we are supporting them, we are bringing measures forward to support our low-income families, seniors and persons with disabilities because that is extremely important, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to take some time today to talk about jobs because jobs are extremely important to me. I know it's important to my colleagues. I know last week the Premier made an announcement on it to convene a Cabinet committee on jobs. This was a very welcomed announcement. We are going to focus on job plans for here at home, not Romania, Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you that; and we will ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are put back to work.

Just a few moments ago I was sat here in my chair listening to the constant negativity that I hear emanating from the Opposition side, particularly the Third Party, who revel in negativity. I happened to log into my Facebook page and I saw someone who was a very excited constituent of mine, who just announced to all

his Facebook friends that he is about to start a job in St. Lawrence at the Canada Fluorspar mine, Mr. Speaker.

We hear the negativity. We hear those who say there's no hope, there's no future, but then I look at the average, normal people who are very excited about the investments we have made.

This is a file that's been going on for 20-plus years. The previous administration passed it around like a hot potato, brought the whole Cabinet down actually, if I recall, in 2011 for a big announcement, the reopening of the mine. Well, it wasn't until the current Member for Burin – Grand Bank got in, along with our Premier and the minister responsible, did that file get off the ground.

Now we have people, ordinary people, who are seeking employment, very proud to be seeking that employment on the Burin Peninsula. But, no, it's all negative, Mr. Speaker. It's all negative. There's nothing happening. There's no future. They're all negative, and it's a shame because we have so much potential and we have to celebrate that potential. We have to ensure that there's progress and that there's prospect for employment.

I also want to make mention of the fact that project ultimately – and the Member for Burin – Grand Bank can correct me if I'm wrong – was made successful by government's \$17 million repayable loan. That would not have gotten off the ground – couldn't get off the ground for 12 years, I say to the Members opposite, until the current Member for Burin – Grand Bank and I were elected. I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of that investment. Although –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: Although it is not in my district, Mr. Speaker, I will not be confined by lines on an electoral boundaries map. We all need to work together and pull on the same oar to create economic growth and jobs.

I also want to talk about the Grieg project, which is something we have also worked very closely

on. Once again shelving our own political ambitions for fame and fortune, Mr. Speaker, and working together for the benefit of the people we represent. We're not in this for credit, we're not in this to see who can get the credit; we're in this to work for the people who need jobs. We're going to carry that file forward. It's something I'm very proud of and it's something we will see to the end. We're going to work our hardest to make that a reality.

We also have tremendous opportunity at the Marystow Shipyard. As the public would know, Mr. Speaker, there's an interest on Kiewit's part to sell the Marystow Shipyard assets that they have and they would retain the Kiewit Offshore Services in Cow Head, which would be their major oil and gas industrial development site.

Why not, Mr. Speaker? Why not, so that we can no longer be plagued by the trials and tribulations of the oil industry in terms of its ups and downs? Why not have a functioning, stable, strong shipyard again? What is wrong with that? That's something that hasn't been paid heed to in the past but it's certainly something we're going to look very closely at. I believe it's part of our overall approach to government.

I also want to touch on – when I talk about ferries, there was just so little homework done, Mr. Speaker, so little homework, no homework at all in fact. Part of what we have tried to do as a government is to bring forward better management. It was a low bar to meet compared to the previous administration, a terribly low bar, but we are bringing better management to what we are doing.

In fact, I'll give you an example. The Minister of Transportation and Works is here with us today. Last year we paved 256 kilometres for \$47.7 million and last year we paved – and the minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but I know I'm not. We paved 90 more kilometres of road for \$5.6 million less, Mr. Speaker.

That is a terrific accomplishment but it was not by luck, Mr. Speaker. It was brought about by positive decision making, with evidence-based approaches and better management. That is something our Premier emphasizes. It is something he brings to every decision that he

makes in government, and it is something we're going to bring forward, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly not akin to Humber Valley Paving, Mr. Speaker, a \$19 million contract that was let out within a matter of hours. That's something we will return to a \$19 million contract – \$19 million. It's shameful. They were all over there, most of them.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to say there is hope and there are things on the horizon. I believe we have a responsibility as legislators to carry forward that message of hope because when we have confidence in Newfoundland and Labrador and our economy, that will translate into confidence, both consumer confidence and business confidence. I believe very strongly that we have to remain confident.

What legacy, I ask, do we want to leave behind, unparalleled debt from the former administration or a solid, fiscal house in order that protects the future generations. What message does our province send to my generation, Mr. Speaker, and generations after me? By passing along this debt that is insurmountable, what legacy is that leaving behind?

Last year when we came into office, I remind Members of this House, we were spending more on interest payments than on the education system. Mr. Speaker, that's a startling statistic. We were shipping more money out the door in interest than we were on investing in the future of our youth and our young people. To me, that is a very concerning fact.

I will read one quote from Hansard from last year, from the Member for St. John's Centre, in fact. I marked this down when she said it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: The people of the province are willing to take tough medicine if there is a plan forward. Well, there is a plan forward. We have outlined what we are setting out to do to put our fiscal house back in order and we are certainly going to put a focus and a spotlight on putting the people back to work, and jobs is the forefront of our agenda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would move Motion 5, that pursuant to provisional Standing Order 11(1) that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 15, 2017.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I’m going to, hopefully, be the concluding speaker to this Concurrence Motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

I reverted to the Government House Leader for the motion, but I recognize the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South for remarks.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It’s a pleasure to get up and speak to our Concurrence here in the House today and our budget debate. One thing I’d like to bring up, because it’s entertaining to listen to Members opposite have their commentary, which is fair play, I guess.

We have a new document that has been released by this current government. It’s called *The Way Forward*, but there was a document that was

released in 2015 called the Red Book. You can’t find the Red Book any more, now we have *The Way Forward*. It took 14, 15 months for them to supposedly find their way forward. I don’t think the general public of the province feel they have found their way forward yet, but they’re trying to convince us that they actually have.

The jury is out on that one, Mr. Speaker. It’s a document that is out there and they like to bandy it about. I guess that’s fair, and that’s something they would do as a government to try to change the conversation, but in the public domain I don’t hear that from the people I talk to, Mr. Speaker. I think that’s a work in progress and there’s a lot more work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, there’s a couple of points – I have lots of material I could talk on but there are a couple of notes I jotted down when Members opposite were speaking. One of the comments was the Opposition give inconsistent views; somewhat arrogant responses come on the other side. We made reference sometimes with our Estimates debate.

The Opposition has a job to do, Mr. Speaker. I guess government opposite should respect what we have to do because at one time Members opposite were on this side of the House actually doing what we’re doing. Opposition is a very important part of our Parliament. Everything we say, every comment we make is not really – on the other side they don’t really appreciate our commentary. We’re meant to show opposition to government to challenge them on their decisions, to make better decisions or more in keeping with the population, the people’s voices.

One person said to me one time: Government is elected by the people, yet the Opposition are the real voice of the people because in government, it’s party politics, you toe the line, you vote as a block. That’s how our Parliament is assembled.

On Opposition side their voices are heard loud and clear. It’s a very important function of our Parliament and it’s a role that we take very seriously. If some Members opposite get somewhat offended by some of our commentary, that just comes with the territory because there was a time before this was flipped over the other way and Members opposite did their best to keep the former administration to task. It’s a job

that we take seriously and we will continue on to keep this administration to task.

Mr. Speaker, I just was listening to the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue. He had a lot of commentary. I only wrote down a few points that had jumped out at me.

He went on to this big lecture on how the shipyard in his own district in Marystown, the Marystown Shipyard didn't get an opportunity to vote on the new ferries that were built in Romania. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I think he should go back and probably look a bit further. The former administration encouraged that shipyard to bid on it. They were very forthcoming. They met with the administration of that shipyard; they met with the top brass. The province wanted them to bid on this contract but they could never get to an agreement from the Marystown Shipyard.

The Member likes to make a bit of hay with the Romania piece but he doesn't have all his facts straight. To get up here in this House and to be critical of my colleague for Conception Bay East – Bell Island and the former administration, he doesn't have his facts right. He doesn't have his facts straight, Mr. Speaker. He does have a shipyard down there but he maybe needs to talk to officials within that shipyard and maybe they'll explain to him.

We hear on the other side all the time that we don't understand, we need to listen better and we don't do a good job as Opposition and they want to say stuff slower to us. Maybe we'll offer a bit of advice opposite. Maybe they need to go and listen up better and go down and get their facts together instead of just throwing false accusations across the House, which I have to say some Members opposite do a great job of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, another point he mentioned; there were a lot of great things happening in his district. I agree with him, I'm sure there are. One of them is the Hebron Project. Well, I guess Members opposite, for Members of the former administration will say

thank you, because that was a project this former administration took on and heralded it.

So we take your compliment seriously, and appreciate the investment we did. Sure, it's happening in your district, but it's going to be a great economic boom for the province. It's going to generate a lot of revenue, and it's where we need to be in our oil industry. Hopefully, as the commodity markets stabilize somewhat and they increase, we'll see a great value from the Hebron Project. But, as I say, we want to thank you for the compliments, to the Member opposite.

Another point, in reference to his own district – I guess the question I have is the *Sound of Islay* had a \$9 million refit, but that wasn't done in Marystown. The last report we got it was done at Newdock here in St. John's, which is fine – that's fine; it's a fair market. But a \$9 million refit – I'd like to know why that wasn't done in Marystown. Why did it end up down to Newdock if the Member opposite is so quick to point out that the ferries couldn't be built there? After the Premier of the day tried to encourage the CEOs of the shipyard to – we really wanted those ferries built in Newfoundland. So this is one of our ferries going to Newdock, why is it not going to Marystown? So maybe the Member opposite can answer to his own people why that's happening. I don't know if they're fully aware of that.

Another point of contention, I hear it opposite and I get somewhat dumfounded by it. You get up over and over and you talk about certain things happened when this administration were in power. The Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, who likes to talk out loud while I'm trying to talk – on another note – I was just looking at the clock – I'd like to make a motion, seconded by my colleague for Conception Bay East – Bell Island to adjourn debate at 5:30. Is that in keeping?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I believe there was a motion put that the House would sit beyond 5:30. So you can continue with your remarks.

MR. PETTEN: I was unsure of that, Mr. Speaker.

So the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue likes to make a great point of talking about decisions made by the former administration. One of his favourite topics is the political – I don't know what you call it, the little bit of we got something and we're going to pursue, with the Humber Valley Paving. Now, they're after announcing an inquiry is coming, but ironically they're going to try to push that as close to the election as possible – fair game. They've been called out in the public on that so I don't know how much that's going to resonate with the general public when they go to do that, but I guess to each their own.

While you cry out these sorts of things, maybe people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, Mr. Speaker. We're just barely forgot about – it's not forgot about in the general public obviously. We have the Bernard Coffey fiasco. That happened a week or so ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: We do not know what that cost, the Member opposite likes to point out. We have asked for the information. We have not received information of what costs has been associated with that. There's a legal case to settle. We didn't get the information, Mr. Speaker. It may turn out to be a lot more than Humber Valley ever was. My point is people in glass houses probably need to be careful when they throw stones.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go on to another one – I'm glad I got this opportunity. During Estimates, myself and my colleague for Cape St. Francis, we joined up on doing several Estimates together due to the fact of the reorganization. I had certain roles, as did he, so two of us teamed up and did the Estimates together.

Under Fisheries and Land Resources, there are a lot of changes. So much so, it was in Question Period here maybe a month or so ago, I guess, when we got up asking questions on –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: We started asking questions on Mistaken Point. We had three people get up before they found out which minister was responsible. That happened. It's on record. Go check it.

We started asking questions about Crown Lands in Corner Brook and, with all due respect, the minister, other than the fact he knew it was in his department, that's all he knew. Which is understandable – I'll be the first to say, there is a lot in their department. I'm not criticizing that.

The Member for Stephenville – Port au Port gets up in this House last week and he basically calls out me and my colleague. I'll name the names. He didn't say it in the House but we're going to name it because it was obvious. It was just as well if he did name the names. We were the ones in the Estimates. We asked for an organizational chart. To my knowledge, I think most of all us come in here when there's reorganization, as a courtesy thing: Could we have an organizational chart?

That happened on April 5, according to the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port. Just on the record, we still have not received it. So maybe we should have asked back in February, but his comments, according to *Hansard* – that was on February 22, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker. I won't point to the Member's name, but one of the PC Members actually asked for a developmental flow chart to explain what portfolios were added to Fisheries and Land Resources. What's wrong with that? If we're going to be critics, if we're the Official Opposition of this government, we need to know for certain there are no surprises, there's nothing that we're missing. We pretty well had a handle on what's moved.

To go further into that one, Mr. Speaker, he goes now that these Estimates occurred in April, just for the record – so we have PC Members over there criticizing our every move, yet it took them just about two months to come up with a question about, well, I wonder what changed in that department. If they were very much concerned about the department, I'm sure they would have asked the question when the department was restructured in February, but that wasn't the case.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad I got the opportunity to come back about this one because we still haven't got the organizational chart. During Estimates, we got to a certain section and there wasn't a person in the Fisheries and Land Resources, executive members of their minister on down – they could not answer our question. We were very obliging. It was a lot of confusion; it was a lot of back and forth.

Eventually, they looked at us and they said we can't answer your question. Our apologies, we cannot your question. There was a lot of confusion. I know my colleague for St. John's East – Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi – the name probably eludes me, but she shared the same confusion, so much so they offered us a technical briefing. We had that last week and guess what? They're giving us another one. The simple fact of the matter is because they're not even sure that some of the questions we were asking that we had intended to ask in Estimates, they're having trouble giving us the answers we need.

It's fine for Members opposite to get up and to be critical. I mean, I'm okay with that most times. That comes with the territory. Again, I have no problem, but keep their facts together, Mr. Speaker. As long as it's based on facts, if we deserve to get called out if something is said here, I don't know about anyone else, I'll speak for myself. I'm fine with that. I have no issue whatsoever. It happens from time to time and it's part of the environment in the House, the back and forth. I can live with that, trust me.

When I listen to Members opposite making this commentary and when they're making it, it's like you listen to it when it's pointed out to you, you're going like really, is this what they have to spend their time at? I would challenge the Member opposite most times during Estimates, the quicker we get our questions asked the quicker we can get out of her, I'd say the happier he is. But then when it's his opportunity to get up and speak he tries to throw fillers and throw barbs across the way at me and my colleague for Cape St. Francis.

As a matter of fact, we like to think we are doing our job and we're doing as good a job as we can possibly do for the people of the province because that's the role of the Opposition of this

province. That's our role, Mr. Speaker. We're not meant to be party supporters of the government opposite; we're meant to oppose their decisions and hopefully encourage them, or put public pressure on them to make decisions that are in keeping – everyone in the province will be happy with. We know we're not going to make everyone happy but the majority, Mr. Speaker. That's our role, and we will continue to do it. We're not going to stop doing what we do.

We'll ask questions, whether it be on an organizational chart, salary detail chart, what have you. We'll ask every question because as someone once told me, no question is a stupid question. No question is an unnecessary question. We'll continue to ask because that's our role and that's what the people expect us to do. Even though we may not please the Members opposite by some of our questions, we're sorry, but that's our job and that's what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker, as long as we are the Official Opposition of this government.

The last time, I'd like to bring up some – again, I like to use some of these figures because I think they're worthwhile. To hear Members opposite: the government wasted money, the former administration wasted money and what did you do with all the billions of dollars? I guess to anyone who don't really know, it's a great play when you're listening to it.

Mr. Speaker, I have lots of information here that I can remind the Members opposite. In my last few minutes, I'd just like to point out some things that I think are worth repeating and reminding the public. In the 2015 budget, which was the final budget of this former administration, there was a *Highlight* book that was done. This is for public information, and it was about some of the spending that happened from the 2004 to 2015.

Some spending highlights were listed: \$8.2 million for dialysis equipment; \$10.5 million, MRI equipment; \$10.5 million for X-ray machinery; \$13.8 million for mammography devices; \$14.7 million for ultrasound equipment; \$15.9 million for linear accelerators; \$20.8 million for CAT scanners.

New long-term care facilities, \$380 million; health care equipment, \$425 million; existing

hospitals and health care facilities, \$300 million; new hospitals and health care facilities, \$218 million. Now there's lots more in health, Mr. Speaker, that's just a few. That's just out of our Estimates.

Under schools, there was over \$600 million invested for K to 12 school infrastructure since 2004 – \$600 million; 1,900 repairs and maintenance projects with an investment of over \$220 million since 2004; 59 capital projects; 14 new schools; 8 new schools in various stages; 27 major extensions and renovations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Ten more major extensions and renovations underway. We had the French Shore Academy, Mr. Speaker, in Port Saunders, \$13.2 million; Labrador Straits Academy, L'Anse-au-Loup, \$15.6 million.

AN HON. MEMBER: Keep going, keep going.

MR. PETTEN: I'll keep going. Oh yeah, I'll keep going.

The point I'm trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is they were all really great investments. They were needed. We had an infrastructure deficit when government took over in 2004. People needed improvements, people needed this stuff. There were roads, there were schools, there were health issues, hospitals. It was a lot of infrastructure. We had a real infrastructure deficit.

At the time when the former administration was spending this money, you could go back, and I'm sure you could check through a lot of Hansard documents and public commentary, the Opposition of the day – which are a lot of current Members opposite or some – we weren't spending enough. They wanted more money spent. They never stood up as an Opposition and told the government opposite, you're spending too much money. On occasion you might have heard it said on a particular project. Overall, they never said that.

Over and over they wanted the extra school. They wanted that road paved. They wanted a

ferry fixed. They wanted more hospital equipment. They wanted 24-hour snow clearing. Members opposite wanted that; they wanted that in their districts.

Our adult dental care was inadequate. Even though there was never one before we brought it in, they cut it; but it wasn't adequate enough when we had it.

You can't talk out of both sides of your face, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry, but as the Government House Leader points out, I was in the back rooms. I wasn't here in the Legislature. I heard those same Members opposite. I listened to them every day. I listened to them every day get up on their soapbox and talk about the same things day in, day out, day in, day out.

I'm down here and I'm listening to, all of a sudden there's righteousness across the way. Why did you do this? Why did you do that? Sure, the Members opposite, we couldn't spend enough. There wasn't enough money coming in to spend what they wanted us to spend. All of a sudden then, the province is spent into a fiscal disaster. It's a nightmare.

If you turned back the clock knowing what we know now, I don't know if we'd do a lot of things differently. Based on what's needed in the province, based on the mouldy schools, based on the infrastructure, the roads were dilapidated, based on the needs of the social sector, people looking for social programming. Do you know what? There are a lot of things I don't know if you could retract. There are obviously some, but for us to turn around the financial fortunes of the province and say nothing we spent was a proper investment, I beg to differ, Mr. Speaker.

I think a lot of people in the province, if they were to really sit down – I talk to a lot of them. They don't really feel that way. It's unfortunate with the financial situation, burden we're facing now, but most people do not look at me as a PC Member or any of my colleagues or former colleagues and say what we did was a waste of money.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The motion is that the Estimates of the Government Services Committee be concurred in.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

MR. KENT: Division, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Call in the Members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Whip of the Third Party ready?

All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

CLERK (Barnes): Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Trimper, Mr. Warr, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Browne, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Ms. Parsley, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Brazil, Ms. Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Ms. Rogers, Mr. Lane.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes, 27; the nays, nine.

MR. SPEAKER: I declare the motion carried.

On motion, Report of Government Services Committee, carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Given the hour of the day, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we recess for supper and return at 6:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Do we have a motion to recess?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: No, motion, okay.

The House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

AN HON. MEMBER: 6:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: 6:30 p.m.