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*Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA*

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The House met at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

I would like to welcome to the public galleries today Shannon Hickey, who is the subject of a Member's statement. As well, we welcome to our gallery Mayor Andrew Shea of Fogo Island; as well as, I believe there are some officials from the council and some council members as well.

Welcome to our galleries.

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

**Statements by Members**

**MR. SPEAKER:** For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Harbour Main, Cape St. Francis, Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Conception Bay South and St. George's – Humber.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. PARSLEY:** Today I give rise to share the success witnessed this weekend in Avondale, at the Eastbound International Speedway and Concert Park.

Fans from across our province, Canada and the US witnessed the opening of the fourth NASCAR "Home Track" in Canada.

The excitement and anticipation was electrifying. The roar and applause of the fans and race car engines echoed in the hillsides. We were spellbound.

I had the pleasure of speaking with Kevin Nevalainen, event management director, who was elated with the overall success of the event.

The owner of Eastbound International Speedway, Paddy Squires, has a remarkable commitment to our youth, as seen through their schools program and race track driver training programs. Kudos to Paddy who turned his dream into a reality.

Professionalism reigns supreme in the entire undertaking. Let us be proud of their achievements, welcome them and their events wholeheartedly and wish them every success.

Squires and the entire team never let the fans down with any entertainment provided, this weekend being no exception.

Mr. Speaker, collectively, let us send our congratulations to the Squires team and thank them for their contributions to the community and province.

Let us all rise to say thank you.

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the 2016 Business Award winners in the Town of Torbay.

On May 5, I had the pleasure of attending the Torbay Business Awards event held at the Kinsmen Centre. Most of the nominees for the awards were in attendance.

Economic Development Officer, Ross Houlihan, spoke on the recent municipal development projects and activities in Torbay; however, the highlight of the evening was the awards presentation.

New Business of the Year was awarded to Edge Beauty Bar co-owners Katie Porter and Suzette Kelly; two young business ladies were delighted with their award.

Entrepreneur of the Year was a husband and wife team, Glen and Chen Stokes, who are owner operators of Mrs. Liddy's Bar and Breakout NL.

Business of the Year award was presented to Brian Eason and Cynthia Littlejohn, owner operators of Joint Therapy. They became just the second business to ever win two Torbay Business Awards, winning New Business Award in 2015.

The Customer Commitment award went to a long time established business in Torbay, Dr. Mathai Dentistry. I can attest of her commitment first-hand because she is my dentist and one of the nicest ladies you will ever meet.

I would like to congratulate all involved.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

**MR. B. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House today to recognize Major William G. Tilley of the Church Lads Brigade on receiving his honorary Doctor of Canon Law from Queens College.

At the age of 101, Major Tilley received this honorary degree on May 12 at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in St. John's. In addition to family and friends, their Honours, Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Frank Fagan and the Honourable Patricia Fagan were in attendance to mark this monumental occasion.

Major Tilley first joined the CLB in 1926. He has served for 90 consecutive years. Major Tilley has been a CLB archivist since 1977 and the Drum Major for the CLB Regimental Band for 63 years.

He is still a pillar of the brigade and a mentor for many young men and women who serve in the CLB today. I consider it a great privilege to know Major Tilley and I am proud to call him a friend.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Major William G. Tilley on receiving his honorary degree and thank him for over 90 years of service to the CLB and to the community.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. PERRY:** I rise in this hon. House to congratulate Ms. Shannon Hickey, recipient of one of six HSBC Bank Canada Woman Leader of Tomorrow Regional Awards in 2015.

As the leader of Enactus Canada group at the College of the North Atlantic, business owner and active volunteer, Shannon understands what it means to achieve success and she has great empathy for others. She recognizes the importance of collaboration to achieve positive results. Shannon successfully lobbied and secured funding for her group to attend the global Enactus event in Beijing. She is actively involved in programs such as Independent You, which teaches financial literacy and responsibility to high school students; and Total Exposure, which promotes the artwork of outpatients who deal with mental health issues.

With a humorous nature and vivacious spirit, Shannon is always welcome at any event and readily lends a hand for numerous community projects; she volunteers with Habitat for Humanity and the Sacred Heart RC Church and actively supports the St. Lawrence Anglican Church in her hometown of Belleoram.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join with me in extending congratulations to Shannon and encourage her to continue offering her skills to help people and our communities.

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.

Mr. Speaker, on March 11, I had the pleasure of attending the 140th anniversary dinner at the Prince of Orange Lodge, LOL #23 at the Foxtrap Parish Hall.

The Loyal Orange Association has made a significant contribution to our community and the residents of Newfoundland through their commitment to various fundraising initiatives, including the CBS Monument of Honour, Janeway, Daffodil Place and many more worthwhile charities.

On March 11, 1876, Most Worshipful Grand Master and Sovereign of the Loyal Orange Association of Canada, Brother M. Bonnell travelled to Newfoundland from Nova Scotia by train to Kelligrews. He entered the new building in Middle Bight Road where he presented the Loyal Orange Warrant and dedicated and named the hall Prince of Orange #23.

During the early years the Orange Lodges were the only meeting halls in many towns. Prince of Orange #23 has served many purposes such as a church, classrooms, a theatre and a polling station where political rallies and fundraisers were held. The social life of the Orange Lodge itself was celebrated in the form of dances, wedding receptions, concerts, birthdays and anniversary parties.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Prince of Orange, LOL #23 on its 140th Anniversary.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for St. George's – Humber.

**MR. REID:** Mr. Speaker, each year the Canadian national darts competition sees the finest young dart players in Canada compete. This past weekend nine provinces participated, including a team from Newfoundland and Labrador.

The age range of the teams is from 10 to 18 years old, and there are two groups: those under 16, and those under 19. Each province submits a team and they play singles, doubles, mixed doubles and team competition.

Awards are given for each competition and points are awarded for each win and total. The province with the highest total wins the Canada Cup, which gives the province the bragging rights as being the best in Canada.

This year, for only the second time in its history, Newfoundland and Labrador won that cup. Three members were from the District of St. George's – Humber: Kaylee Barnes, Myaella Stoddard and Darcee Gale. The other members

were Amy Spracklin, Erica Spracklin, Brad Dobbin, Devon Pope, Cody Kerrivan, Hunter Pike and Jayden Kelly.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating the Newfoundland and Labrador youth darts team on winning the Canada Cup.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Commemoration of the First World War and the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today for Honour 100, we have the Member for the District of Placentia West – Bellevue.

**MR. BROWNE:** I will now read into the record the following 40 names of those who lost their lives in the First World War in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve or the Newfoundland Mercantile Marine. This will be followed by a moment of silence.

Lest we forget: John Benjamin Ridgley, Garland Ridout, Sydney Ridout, Thomas J. Ring, Albert Roberts, Cecil Roberts, Francis Roberts, Frank Roberts, Frank Roberts, John Roberts, Ray Maxwell Roberts, Thomas Stephen Roberts, Edward Joseph Rodgers, Thomas Rodgers, Thomas Edward Rodgers, Simeon Rogers, Walter Rolls, Harold Romaine, Thomas Ronan, William Joseph Roost, Frederick Charles Roper, Cecil Rose, George Rose, George Rose, James Rose, John Rose, John Rose, Peter Rose, Michael Joseph Ross, R. Wallace Ross, Matthew Rossiter, Charles Rowe, Frederick Rowe, Henry Rowe, Henry Mott Rowe, Edward Clayton Rowsell, Gordon Rowsell, H. John R. Rowsell, Reginald S. Rowsell, John Russell.

(Moment of silence.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

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

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

Mr. Speaker, on Friday I was in Heart's Delights-Islington along with Minister Judy Foote where we had the pleasure of participating in the announcement of the 2016 recreational cod fishery.

I am very pleased with the federal government's decision to extend the recreational fishery by 14 days, which includes all weekends in July and August, as well as the Canada Day and Labour Day long weekends.

The recreational fishery presents exciting opportunities for growth, including marine tourism. With the recreational fishery now extended into weekends, provincially-licensed tour boat operators will have the opportunity to provide tourists with a truly unique experience.

This was a priority area for the Premier when he appointed me as Fisheries Minister and Minister of Aquaculture, to work with my federal counterparts to expand the recreational fishery and to look at opportunities to develop marine tourism.

Planning for the revitalization of groundfish is something that was also outlined in my mandate letter. We have already taken steps toward achieving this through funding for the establishment of a Fisheries Advisory Council and the new Seafood Innovation and Transition Program announced in *Budget 2016*.

Mr. Speaker, the recreational fishery is something that many people look forward to every year. As stocks rebound we will continue to support expansion of both the recreational and commercial cod fisheries.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I, too, am pleased with the

announcement of the recreational cod fishery. Every week since the House opened I presented a petition emphasizing the problems in the fishery and making sure it was done in a way that safety was paramount in everything.

Putting people on the water on the weekends and giving them more opportunity to get out is a great announcement, but it's unfortunate it isn't a priority of this government over across the way because our fishery needs a lot more.

We have a shrimp fishery that's in crisis. We have a crab fishery where the catches are way down. Our harvesters are wondering where their quotas are. I'd like to see the government act more and represent the harvesters in this province.

Thank you very much.

**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. The changes to the recreational cod fishery will provide new opportunities for marine tourism. Of course, our tourism industry in coastal communities is inextricably tied to our inshore fishery. I look forward to seeing the commercial cod management measures for 2016 and hope they provide commensurate measures for the commercial fishery as the industry continues to cope with challenging changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, the provincial government is committed to ensuring students in Newfoundland and Labrador have their educational needs met through various resources including distance education.

Through the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation, we are ensuring that senior high school students, especially those in rural and remote areas, have access to the courses they need for a rich and diverse educational experience.

CDLI is a great learning and teaching resource which supports approximately 950 students completing over 40 courses in 118 schools. Subject areas for CDLI courses include math, science, English language arts, social studies, technology education, career education, skilled trades, French, music and art.

Mr. Speaker, as the end of another school year quickly approaches, many of our senior high and intermediate students will be taking public and final exams. The resources available on the CDLI website are not limited to students in rural or remote regions. This online resource provides high quality programming to all students and offers free high school review materials, old exams to review for practice, and free live online tutoring. Online tutoring is also available in math and science for students in grades seven to nine.

I encourage all students to take advantage of what CDLI has to offer by visiting [www.cdli.ca](http://www.cdli.ca). I also invite Members of the House of Assembly to share this information with students in their districts as they prepare to write exams.

Good luck to all students with their year-end exams.

Thank you.

**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 the advance copy of his statement. It's great to see the minister talking about an important program our administration believes so strongly in. A program we responsibly invested in.

I have to say, it's beyond ironic that the minister who will be largely responsible for doing

damage to the province's education system is fabricating concerns over whether students have access to courses and programs. This statement is extremely disingenuous when at the same time you're closing schools, axing 54 libraries, cancelling school infrastructure projects, taxing books, laying off teachers, combining grades and gutting the Intensive Core French program.

You want to brag about what you're doing to improve access to education resources – this minister and this government have lost touch with all reality. Their polling numbers today show that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** 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. The CDLI has certainly been successful in the delivery of high school courses over the years. I'm sure students are finding the online study resources helpful as well.

However, the bottom line, and what the minister has not told us, is that some areas still have slow and intermittent Internet which creates barriers. It would be helpful if he had told us what is being done to ensure that all students across the province have equal access.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, on April 20 the Premier, flanked by the Minister of Natural Resources, stood before the media and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and stressed that the former CEO of Nalcor's resignation was a personal one that was first discussed at a meeting between the two on Sunday, April 17, and later confirmed at a meeting on Tuesday evening, April 19.

I ask the Premier: When you stood before the cameras and the people of the province on April 20 and announced Mr. Martin's resignation, were you aware that it was actually a termination and not a resignation?

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

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

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

The information, of course, based on the discussion that I had with Mr. Martin was that he was stepping aside. As a matter of fact, these are not just my words, but these are the words of the former CEO of Nalcor.

Just immediately after we addressed the media, Mr. Martin, the outgoing CEO, addressed the media himself. It was his words that he was stepping aside and that it was his decision based on where he was in his life.

So the stepping aside was actually a decision by Mr. Martin. These were his words and this is what he confirmed at around 11:45 on April 20.

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

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

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

We know government officials and we know lawyers were involved representing all parties in these discussions.

I ask the Premier: During the meeting with the former CEO, Mr. Martin, on Sunday, April 17,

did Mr. Martin tell you that he was going to resign?

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

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

The meeting on Sunday night was a meeting that Mr. Martin called for. He was the one who asked for that meeting. A number of issues were discussed around Nalcor and so on.

It was then we took some time, and it was in a meeting on Tuesday that he then informed us that he would be actually making his decision and on Wednesday morning he would be stepping aside. That's the information that was shared at the meeting on Tuesday, not the Sunday meeting at all, I say to the former premier. It was on the Tuesday evening.

Then that decision led into the events of April 20. So the information that we have now, that's available to us, is now with the Department of Justice and they will be reviewing the information that's available. Then we'll be making our decision, what options we have, as a government.

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

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

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

There were two meetings, one on Sunday, April 17 and one on Wednesday, April 19. Again, we know officials and lawyers were heavily involved in the discussion and process.

I ask the Premier: When was the issue of severance first discussed with Mr. Martin?

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

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

The meeting was on Sunday night. There was a meeting requested by Mr. Martin, and the second meeting actually took place on Tuesday night. The discussion around severance is a question you would have to ask the board of directors or Mr. Martin, because at that point

anything that was related to his contract was with the board at directors at Nalcor.

The contract for the CEO was with the board of directors at Nalcor. So that question would best be asked of those parties.

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

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

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

Again, I say to the Premier there were two meetings, Sunday, April 17 and the next one on Tuesday, April 19.

I ask the Premier again: When was the issue of severance first discussed? Was it on Tuesday night or was it on Sunday night?

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

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

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

Well, the terms of the contract, as I said, that was with the board of directors of Nalcor, so that any decision around what the severance package could look like was a decision that was made by the board of directors.

Subsequent to that, I was not part of the discussion around what any severance package would look like. Did I see any draft of an agreement that was made? No, I did not, so none of that information was shared with me. The information that I got came to us on May 5. That information is now with the Department of Justice for them to review and do their own analysis, to provide analysis and advice that would come back to us. We will consider what options that we have available to us based on the information that we will get from the Department of Justice.

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

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

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

Premier, a very simple question: Did you discuss severance with Mr. Martin on Tuesday, April 19?

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

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

Well, any discussion on severance was with the board of directors. The contract was with the board of directors. I can't say it any more clearer than that. So any severance package would have been discussed with the board of directors of Nalcor. That was their decision. The CEO, it's their employee, the contract that they had was held with them, Mr. Speaker. So any settlement agreement, any decision around what the package would look like, was done by the board of directors of Nalcor. That was not something that I was party to; they did that themselves. The information that we have now available to us – made available to us on May 5 – is now with the Department of Justice for their review, for their analysis.

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

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

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

That's not the question I asked. So I'm going to ask the question again, it's very simple.

On April 19, did you discuss severance with Mr. Martin?

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

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

As I would with any contract that's in place, I would expect that any agency would live up to whatever the contracts and conditions are. The contract in this particular case with the CEO, Mr. Martin, squarely, the responsibility to deliver on whatever the conditions of the employment for their CEO was with the board of directors of Nalcor. The decision was made by the board of directors of Nalcor. That was not something I was party to. The information came to me on May 5. I can't say it any more clearly than that.



I'm not so sure if the outgoing premier – by the way, it was a contract that was designed by the previous administration and a board appointed by them.

So, with that said, the information that I received on May 5 is now with the Department of Justice.

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

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

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

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

I remind him that the Minister of Finance was on the board at the time, but he hasn't answered the question. Premier, I don't know why you won't answer the question. It's a very simple question. The fact you won't answer it is significant.

Did you discuss severance with Mr. Martin in your discussion with him on April 19? A simple question.

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

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

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

Well, the former premier, of all people in this province, should know that the CEO was an employee, the CEO of Nalcor. It wasn't my responsibility and my objective – anything at all related to the Office of the Premier. Maybe they are used to interfering in that office, I can't answer that. Maybe that's something they did on a regular basis.

But, the contract with the CEO and the severance package that became public on May 4, the information I received around that on May 5, is now with the Department of Justice. We will be exploring what options we have as a government, that we have available to us, which would include how severance was paid and so on. So, this will be analyzed and reviewed by the Department of Justice, then the decision on what options we have available to us on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's

when we will make the decision that we have that's available to us.

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

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

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

So we're going to assume he did discuss it. He won't answer the question. He won't provide the information, so we're going to assume that he did discuss it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the Premier: Considering we now know – or it's safe to conclude because you won't say otherwise – you had a discussion about severance. If you had a problem with the severance, the \$1.4 million severance, why didn't you move on it or take action on it?

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

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

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

I'm sure the former premier would know just by his own management, his own planning, that he makes a lot of assumptions. As a matter of fact, they assumed they had a deal with the fisheries fund. They assumed wrong. They also assumed that this year we would not have a \$2.7 billion deficit. Mr. Speaker, they were wrong. So I was not about to make any assumptions.

The contract with the CEO squarely lied with the – was with the board of directors of Nalcor. That information that I became aware of on May 5 is with the Department of Justice, Mr. Speaker, and that's when the decisions will be made on what options we have available to us.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** It's regrettable that I have to interrupt question and answer period. I'm asking the Member for Mount Pearl North to respect the individual that has been recognized to speak.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Premier won't answer, won't say specifically if he did or did not, won't confirm or deny that he had discussions on severance with Mr. Martin. He did say on May 5 he became aware. The rest of the province knew on May 4. He became aware on May 5.

I ask the Premier: What did you instruct the Department of Justice to do on May 5, and who in the department was assigned to do whatever it is you wanted done?

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

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

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

What I said, the details around the severance package which I became aware of on May 5. Then after review of that, we actually handed that over to the Department of Justice which is where it is today. Right now, I think the responsibility on all of us is to let the Department of Justice take the time they need to do a proper review so that we will know what options we have available to us based on the decision that was made by the former board of Nalcor.

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

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

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Who did you contact in the Department of Justice?

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

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

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

Maybe the former premier, what he's asking for is specific names. We have a full group of people, of course, that are within the Department of Justice. I'm not in that department on a day-to-day basis but I'm very comfortable and very confident in the people we have working on that file within the Department of Justice.

Clearly, I will tell you right now, that whoever it takes, whoever the individuals are within the Department of Justice, these are – maybe there will be multiple people, but we will do whatever it takes – the individuals that we have in the Department of Justice to make sure that we do a proper review and a proper analysis of this.

It's not about the individuals. There will be a number of individuals that will be involved in this I'm sure, from beginning to end.

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

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

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

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

I ask the Premier: Why did you wait until just yesterday to make this public that you had provided direction to the Department of Justice to review this circumstance? Why did you wait until yesterday?

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

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

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

Well, as I said, I became aware of the conditions around the decision that was made by the board of Nalcor on May 5. So we handed that over to the Department of Justice for their review. Once that review is completed, what information that we can actually legally put forward and make public, I'm hoping that we'll be able to put all of it out there, Mr. Speaker. That's clearly where I'd like to be on this.

Of course, there's a process that we have to go through, so the timing on all of this is – and as the former premier would know, you often go to the Department of Justice for advice on many issues. If we were to stand up in this particular House and we were to say, okay, by the way we just called the Department of Justice, we need an opinion on that, we would probably be doing that every day as the former premier should know.

Right now, the Department of Justice is doing a review. Whatever information we can put out there, once that's completed, we will.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is on the record as saying much earlier that he had a legal opinion on this that guided the decisions that were made.

Will you table that legal opinion here in the House?

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

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

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

Any legal opinions that I would have received so far are still with the Department of Justice right now for their analysis. I have not received anything at all from a legal opinion prior to May 5. That work is ongoing now with the Department of Justice.

As information becomes available to them, they will do their analysis. Then we'll see what information, what options we have available to us once the review is completed.

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

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

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

The Premier is on the record as publicly saying he had a legal opinion which led to the decision of paying the severance. You said we have a legal opinion. It was your words, Premier.

Where is that legal opinion? Will you table that here in the House?

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

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

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

I'm very glad, actually, to clarify this and speak to this and answer this question. The legal opinions, based on the severance that was paid out to the former CEO, are with Nalcor. That is the legal opinion, the advice that was given to them to make their decision that they eventually used to create the agreement and the severance package that was put forward to Mr. Martin.

The legal opinions that the former premier is talking about are in possession of Nalcor. It is their opinion.

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

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

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

The Premier is on the record as saying that there was a legal opinion that based the decision for providing the severance.

Did you actually see the legal opinion, Premier?

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

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

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

No, I have not seen any legal opinion or advice that was given to Nalcor. That is not something that I would be privy to. That was given to Nalcor.

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

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

**MR. P. DAVIS:** So the Premier says it was a legal opinion at Nalcor, which we heard coming into the House today that Nalcor doesn't have a legal opinion. He says it was part of his decision-making process.

How could you say you used a legal opinion as part of your own decision-making process when you're saying now you never saw a legal opinion?

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

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

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

Well, I'm going to try and clarify this for the former premier again. The decision around severance was made with the board of directors of Nalcor. Let's be very clear. The board of directors made the decision on the severance with the former CEO.

The former premier makes reference to an opinion that was given. He's saying there was no opinion given. Clearly, if he checked for the record, there was an opinion given. There was a verbal opinion that was given to the board of Nalcor. That's been clarified, as I understand it to be. That is not an opinion that was given to me; neither should it be as Premier of the province. The people responsible for the CEO of Nalcor are indeed the board of directors of Nalcor. It was there opinion and their decision.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I will ask Members again for their respect. I'm fully expecting there will be no heckling during question and answer period.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

I want to ask the Premier again because this is very important. He spoke publicly and said that the decision on severance, and his position, was related directly to a legal opinion. Now he is saying today that he never saw the legal opinion. There wasn't actually a written legal opinion. It was a verbal opinion.

Premier, can you clarify that? Are you saying decisions were made based on verbal advice, not an opinion, when you publicly said you had a legal opinion?

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

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

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

Let's clarify. The opinions given based on the severance and the decisions made based on the severance of the former CEO were given – not to me; it was given to the board of directors of Nalcor. They own the contract. They held the contract with the former CEO.

To clarify this for the former premier, any legal advice, any legal opinions were given to the board of directors of Nalcor. That was advice and opinion not given to me, but given to the board of Nalcor. It was based on the advice and the opinions that they were given, I understand. That is how they made their decision.

We now have the Department of Justice involved with government, our own officials in the Department of Justice to see what options we have. They will review that. They will do their own analysis of that, then a decision can be made on what options we have available to us.

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

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

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

So the Premier is saying he was informed of a legal opinion. Well, tell us this Premier: Who provided that opinion directly to you?

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

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

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

On May 5, there was information that was given to me about how the decision was made. I've now turned that over to the Department of Justice for their review. Once their analysis is completed, we will know what options we have available to us. Then we will be in the position, I am hoping, that all of this information, based on what transpired between April 20 and May 5, this is information that, based on the opinions we get from the Department of Justice, we're hoping to get as much of this out there in the public realm as possible.

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

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

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

I'll try this again.

Who shared the opinion with you, Premier?

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

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

Who shared the opinion with me? Mr. Speaker, the opinion was not shared with me. What has happened here is the board of directors of Nalcor, who hold the contract, they went out, they got legal advice on the decision they had made. It was exclusively their decision to actually terminate the former CEO without cause.

That decision rests with the board of directors at Nalcor. We now have this information, which is currently under review with the officials of the Department of Justice within government.

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

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

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

So, the Premier never saw a legal opinion. He somehow knows there is one, but no one told him or shared it with him. It wasn't shared with him at all. He repeated several times yesterday that there was a legal opinion.

How did you even know there was a legal opinion if nobody shared it with you, Premier?

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

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

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

Well, I think the whole province knows that there was an opinion. If the former premier just listened to the media outlets, there was an opinion that was just – as a matter of fact, I think it was the officials at Nalcor that just told the

people of the province that there was a verbal opinion they had sought. So it's very clear this is a decision that was made by Nalcor.

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

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

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

Well, the Premier of the province addressed the people of the province in the media and said there was a legal opinion. Repeated it several times, repeated it yesterday. Now today he's telling us he's not aware of the legal opinion. He's going by what was in the media, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely shameful, the Premier of the province stands before the people and shares an opinion –

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

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

What is actually shameful here is we have the former premier here playing politics with this. I clearly said yesterday, yes, there was an opinion that was given to the board of directors at Nalcor. I've always stated that – the opinion was given to the board of directors at Nalcor. It wasn't given to me as Premier. It was advice that was given to the board of directors – the former board of directors at Nalcor.

So that opinion, that advice, squarely to them, they made their decisions based on that. The next review, next legal opinion based on this will be done with the officials within our own department. Once that analysis, that review is completed, we will then know what options we have available to us.

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

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

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

I'm trying to clarify this and make a full understanding. Were you informed what the legal opinion was? Were you informed of that?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, so many times today, the opinion given legally, the advice was given to the board of directors, so I was not informed. The legal advice that was given to the board of directors at Nalcor, that was advice that was given to them.

Based on that, they made their decision. Based on that decision, now we're going to do our own review within the Department of Justice here representing the people of our province. That's the step that we are at today. The opinions given were given to the board of directors at Nalcor.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we know there's a resolution of the board regarding the termination of the former CEO. Will you table that resolution here in the House of Assembly?

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

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

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

The information that we have available to us – the former premier says he knows it was a resolution. Maybe he's got a copy of it. But whatever information we have right now is with the Department of Justice. Once they have done their review and their analysis, all of this information that we can put out there publically, legally, we are more than willing to do it.

There is no reason I would anticipate that a resolution – the board of directors is not something that can be made public, but that is really a decision that I will take the advice from our own Department of Justice. Clearly, I think this is something that can be done. I have really no issue with it, but we want to make sure that we complete the review and the analysis from the Department of Justice before any of this information is released.

I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, the more information that we can put out there on this, that is where I want to be.

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

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

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

So, Premier, will you table all of that information in the House here this afternoon?

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

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

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

Well, clearly I have to say, that is one of the worst questions I have ever heard this former premier say. After all we've been through here right now, what he's expecting me to do is table information without even going through a process that we would go through – maybe the former premier is used to interfering with Access to Information and Protection of Privacy. Maybe that's what he's used to doing when he sat in this chair, but I can tell you right now, I will respect the process of the individuals that are involved. And it's when we get through that process, when the analysis is completed, I will be very happy to put to the people of this province any information that can be made public. I'm hoping that it can be all made public, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Yes, \$1.4 million is significant dollars to oversee, I'd say to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims he had no involvement or knowledge of the terms of Mr. Martin's departure. So I ask the Premier: Did you meet with, or have any discussions with

members of the Nalcor board to discuss his actual departure?

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

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

I met a number of times with the former chair of Nalcor. I never met really with the board of directors at Nalcor. That meeting never happened, but it was not related specifically to a contract or a severance agreement. There was no information that was shared with me about a draft severance or any of the details. That information, I became aware of on May 5, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Did you have any discussions with the board on the future employment of Mr. Martin?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** No, Mr. Speaker, I never had any discussions with the board of Nalcor.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Just to be clear, Premier, did you have any discussions with the board on the future employment of Mr. Martin?

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

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

Well, the question the Member opposite asked is about discussions with the board of Nalcor about the future employment of Mr. Martin. No, I did not have any discussions with the board.

We had the meeting on Tuesday night with Mr. Martin. There were no members of the board present at that meeting. The decision was made

on the future of Mr. Martin. He made that decision himself when he made a decision to step aside. The severance package was then determined by the outgoing – the former board of Nalcor.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Natural Resources: What involvement did she have in this matter, and when did she become aware of the details of the termination agreement for Mr. Martin?

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

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

I was pleased to be involved in the meetings with Mr. Martin on April 17 and again on April 19. I was with the Premier when we were having the discussions with Mr. Martin when he decided to step down on the 20th of April.

As has been determined and discussed here this afternoon, the decisions around the contract of Mr. Martin rest with the board of directors. The board of directors made the determination.

I think his final question was on the contract agreement. I did not see anything until I returned from Houston on May 9.

**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 Premier has told us that he became aware on April 21 of the Nalcor board's decision to terminate Mr. Martin without cause.

I ask the Premier: Why did he not immediately inform the public of the discrepancy between Nalcor's announcement and that of the CEO.

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

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

The decision by the board of directors of Nalcor, when I became aware of that, they had already had their decision made. So that was on April 20, I think it was, I say to the Member opposite.

The decision was – we had done our press releases and the former CEO had already spoken to the public as well. It was after that the board had made their decision. It was really nothing for me to report there. I had not seen any of the details about the impact that would have on any severance agreement until May 5.

**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.

Why didn't he immediately get the Department of Justice involved then?

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

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

The conditions in the contract with the former CEO of Nalcor squarely, as I said, rest with the board of directors of Nalcor. They had made their decision. I was not aware of the terms and the conditions of the agreement that was reached with the former CEO. Therefore the impact, the details around the nearly \$1.4 million severance was made public around May 4 and the conditions around the agreement, how that was approached, I became aware of on May 5.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, so many times today that is now with the officials at the Department of Justice and they are now doing their analysis and review, and we look forward to seeing what options we have on behalf of government in the coming days.

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

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

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

The Premier can request through a resolution of the House for the Auditor General to investigate the matter of the outgoing CEO's severance.

I ask the Premier: Will he bring a resolution to this House of Assembly to ask the Auditor General to investigate the full circumstances of Mr. Martin's departure from Nalcor and the board's conduct in approving severance and bonus payments?

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

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

I think the prudent thing to do and the responsible thing to do right now is to let the officials at the Department of Justice do their work. They will do their review. They will do their analysis of the information that they have access to. And based on that review and that analysis, then we will see what options that we have available to us.

The AG might be one of those options. There might clearly be some other options that are available to us. But I think the prudent, responsible thing to do, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, is to let this process unfold. Once it's completed, then we will know what options we have available to us.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier: On such an important issue, why will he not go directly to the Auditor General when this is such a crucial issue for the people of the province?

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

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

As I said, I think the responsible and the prudent thing to do is to let the Department of Justice – going directly there right now and circumventing a process that has already been started and already established, it is probably



best in all our interests to let the Department of Justice complete the work and the task that they've been asked and assigned to do.

I'm not expecting this to take a long, long time. Then, once that work is completed, we will know. We will have a good understanding of what options that we have available to us. One of them might very well be the AG. If that's the best option that we see available to us, well that's the option that we will take. But first of all, clearly there is a process started, there's a process that we will let unfold and when that process is completed, we will then be in the position to make the best decision based on the options that we have available to us.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has full legislative power to ask the Auditor General to intervene and, according to the Premier, the Department of Justice has been reviewing the issue of severance paid to former CEO Martin for three weeks now. Has the Premier received any report or partial report of their findings?

I ask the Premier: When does he expect this review to be finished?

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

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

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

A report is really something that will be finalized at some point, where the Department of Justice will do the due diligence that they see in a very responsible fashion and make sure they do the review that's required and that we have asked them to do. So to put a timeline, a date on that would not be responsible, but I don't anticipate this to be a long review, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to getting this completed as well on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We need to know what options we have available to us so that we can then make the informed decision that's required in the best interests of the people of our province.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution: a resolution respecting the appointment of members of the Independent Appointments Commission.

Be it resolved by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS subsection 6(3) of the *Independent Appointments Commission Act* provides that five members are to be appointed to an Independent Appointments Commission by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on a resolution of the House of Assembly; and

WHEREAS subsection 6(4) of the act provides that the Lieutenant Governor in Council designate one of the members of the commission to be chairperson;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the following persons be appointed members of the Independent Appointments Commission: Mr. Clyde K. Wells, chairperson; Ms. Zita Cobb; Ms. Shannie Duff; Mr. Philip R. Earle and Mr. Derek Young.

Mr. Speaker, I further give notice pursuant to Standing Order 11 that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m., tomorrow, Thursday.

Pursuant to Standing Order 11, I give notice that this House do not adjourn at 10 p.m., tomorrow, May 26.

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

There is a motion that the House do not adjourn tomorrow at 5:30.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CLERK (Ms. Barnes):** We don't vote (inaudible).

**MR. SPEAKER:** We don't vote on – sorry about that.

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**MR. JOYCE:** I tried to help you out there, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An To Amend The Co-operative Act, Bill 30.

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

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act, Bill 31.

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

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. 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 humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS government has once again cut the libraries budget, forcing the closure of 54 libraries; and

WHEREAS libraries are often the backbone of their communities, especially for those with little access to government services where they offer learning opportunities and computer access; and

WHEREAS libraries and librarians are critical in efforts to improve the province's literacy levels which are among the lowest in Canada; and

WHEREAS already strapped municipalities are not in a position to take over the operation and cost of libraries;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to keep these libraries open and work on a long-term plan to strengthen the library system.

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

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I stand with this petition which is dealing with one of the most onerous pieces of the terrible *Budget 2016*.

People have been protesting, not just the people in the communities where the libraries are closing but people here on the Avalon Peninsula. Again, the petition I have today is from people in St. John's, really concerned that we do not have equality in this province for people in urban centres along with people in rural centres. They are disturbed that this government is just completely ignoring the needs of our people both on a community level and as individuals.

We have said over and over that we have terrible literacy levels in this province. We used to say it was the older generation only, where they didn't have opportunities in rural Newfoundland over the years. It was older people, but that's not the case. We have poor literacy levels in young adults as well. This government once again continues to ignore.

Now today they're priding themselves because they were forced to make changes to one aspect of the budget. We're already getting emails and phone calls, I am, from people saying, well, if

we put enough pressure on will they change something else? One of the things people want changed is the decision on the libraries. Maybe they should think about this as well, Mr. Speaker, with the wonderful pocket of money they say they are getting from the federal government, which I can't even see is going to cover the change they've made to the levy. I'm dying to hear how they've done the math on that one.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to stand here on this floor and speak for people who do not want their libraries closed because it's a loss to the community. It's a loss to people, seniors in particular. They say they're worried about seniors. Well, seniors need their libraries in order to go and use computers, to gain the services that they have to gain from government through computers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

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

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

WHEREAS the decision has been made to close the Hare Bay/Dover medical clinic; and

WHEREAS the transfer of medical services will negatively affect our residents; and

WHEREAS neighbouring medical facilities will be overcrowded; and

WHEREAS this overcrowding and transferring of medical services will cost government more money than what keeping the existing clinic open would cost;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to reverse the decision to close the Hare Bay/Dover medical clinic.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by over 1,050 people of the Hare Bay/Dover area affecting their clinic and they wanted me to make this petition here today. Hopefully we can work with these to resolve this dilemma.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS libraries promote literacy and provide access to information for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; and

WHEREAS communities in our province depend on libraries to increase their knowledge and further their opportunities; and

WHEREAS the closures of libraries in the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Newfoundland and Labrador, was a result of the Liberal budget of 2016; and

WHEREAS the residents of this district will now have to travel over an hour to access a library;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately reverse the closure of the libraries in Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

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

Mr. Speaker, certainly the constituents of my district would support the reinstatement of libraries all across this province because the only place they're closing is in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Now, imagine that, a Liberal government tearing the life out of rural Newfoundland and Labrador yet again.

Let's talk about – they say it's all about regionalization. Let's talk about – we're using the context of my district and I'm sure if the Members opposite were able to get up and speak to theirs, they would oppose their decisions. One community out of 22 will be served by their regionalization plan, Mr. Speaker – just one.

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

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** It being Private Members' Day, I call on the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair to bring forward her motion.

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

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

I'm happy to stand today. I introduced a motion on Tuesday that would be debated here this afternoon and I'll take the next 15 minutes to speak to the motion.

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's proposal to provide the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit, a refundable tax credit for low-income seniors, which this year is providing some 42,000 seniors in our province with payments of up to \$971 – the highest amount ever.

My district, the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, not unlike the rest of the province, but perhaps in rural areas, coastal Labrador for sure, we have an aging population that I think it's more pronounced in rural areas. I believe we're saying by 2025, one in every four people in the province will be a senior, and I'm sure where I live that's going to be higher than that one in four. So anything that we can do to support the seniors in our province who we all know live on low income, most of them, Old Age Security, maybe a tiny bit of Canada Pension.

Where I make my home in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair people who have historically always earned a living from the fishery, their Canada Pension might only be \$17 or \$18 because they didn't work and they didn't

pay into that. So very low income, and we recognize again, in rural parts, the high costs of goods and services, the high cost of moving about to see a specialist.

So anything that we can do, Mr. Speaker, to support these seniors, we're in fact going to do that. Because who are these seniors? The 30 of us over here on this side, they're our family, they're our parents, and they're our grandparents. Anything we can do to support those who blazed a trail for us, we owe such a great deal of gratitude to our seniors.

My grandfather, Ben Powell – I was raised by my grandparents, and I say that proudly again and again in this House, because they instilled values and morals in me that I would like to think helped guide and influence the decisions I make every single day. I would listen to stories from them of what life was like back in the '30s and the '40s and the '50s, and when people say we're going backwards or we haven't progressed, I think to those stories and I think we have come a long way, Mr. Speaker.

So those are just some of the reasons why the well-being of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador are paramount in any considerations that our government makes. Mr. Speaker, we've been hearing a lot about the budget that was brought down on April 14. Even though we're part of a government that brought down the budget we haven't been shy in saying it was a terrible budget.

There were many, many difficult choices that had to be made, Mr. Speaker, with the budget. Do we like it? Were we happy to make those decisions? Absolutely not, because the people that are impacted by this, they are also our family, they are our friends, they are our communities. We are also, all of us here, representing districts in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, when you're faced with a \$2.7 billion debt – and I was reflecting on this a little bit as I thought about the PMR; what would happen to those seniors had the province, teetering on bankruptcy, gone bankrupt, if another province had taken over the affairs of this province, or the Government of Canada?

Mr. Speaker, this budget will be infusing \$8.48 billion into the provincial economy. Entwined in that \$8.48 billion is a number of very rewarding things for seniors that once the cheques and the installments start rolling out, some of them starting with a double payment in October, I know they're going to be well received.

Mr. Speaker, there are now more people in Canada over the age of 65 than there are under the age of 15, so that just reiterates what I've been saying. We certainly have aging demographics at play here in a very big way. Our province, Newfoundland and Labrador's population, is rapidly aging. By 2036 – that's just one generation from now – our province is expected to have the highest percentage of seniors in the country at 31 per cent; one in four individuals, Mr. Speaker, and many that live on a low income.

That's why special consideration and care was taken. When the budget was coming down, when some harsh measures, some that are very temporary, had to be made in order to save Newfoundland and Labrador from this atrocious financial mess that it was left in, there was special care given for this group, Mr. Speaker.

Our government, one of the platforms that we ran on was the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, and that's being carried through because we've long recognized the importance of taking care of seniors.

Mr. Speaker, back in 2014, we hosted a number of engagement sessions soliciting feedback from our province's seniors and other stakeholders. Some of the decisions that we have made have been based on the information that we got at those sessions. I, myself, like many of my colleagues, went throughout my district and I held meetings – sometimes in the afternoon, sometimes in the evening. The things we heard from seniors, some of the difficult choices they have to make in the winter when it's more expensive to heat their homes and things like that, we listened. This feedback has guided some of the choices that were made in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, we proposed the enactment of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate when we were in Opposition, and we carried through on that. We will be carrying through. We felt very

strongly that our province's seniors, a large and dynamic segment of our population, deserved an independent voice speaking on their behalf in the Legislature.

*Budget 2016*, I'm very happy to say, contained the funds necessary to establishing this office. So we are fully committed to ensuring our seniors have a dedicated statutory officer, similar to the Auditor General. That office will be listening to seniors of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We recognize, Mr. Speaker, that seniors have diverse care needs. Seniors face many, many challenges as they get along the road of life. A seniors' advocate is an on the ground resource for seniors. It would be ideally placed within government that would help us respond quickly to evolving needs and issues.

Mr. Speaker, by putting in an office like this, once again we are saying to seniors there will be no political interference. There are some things where politics should not play a role. When it comes to caring for our aging population, that's certainly one place where the health and well-being of seniors need to trump everything else.

I was very pleased to see this budget allocate \$300,000 for the Seniors' Resource Centre to enhance its referral and information system. This will allow us to deliver services to seniors more efficiently and effectively.

*Budget 2016*, Mr. Speaker, will dedicate \$300,000 for the provision of age-friendly transportation services, which addresses a critical need for seniors with mobility issues.

Mr. Speaker, we get up and we run all day long in here, and we run from meeting to meeting. A lot of times we take our health for granted and we're not grateful and thankful for it. When you see a senior who's trying to manoeuvre in a wheelchair or a cane and they're going slow, those are the people who understand the need for friendly transportation services.

Mr. Speaker, this \$300,000 will address critical needs for seniors with mobility issues. There is money allocated to support the continued development of age-friendly communities throughout our province. This is a very

important initiative that is intended to address the demographic shift as more and more of our citizens leave the workforce and retire. That's what's happening, Mr. Speaker.

In my district as I go around and knock on doors, which I've done two or three times now, you see many, many more people with grey hair or no hair than you do younger people because of the aging demographics. That's why it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we focus on –

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I'm getting a little bit of heckling here, Mr. Speaker, from my own side because we have a few here with grey hair and no hair. Fortunately, they are still healthy and well. I don't think they need age-friendly transportation or they have mobility issues.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, we need to focus on this group and the special needs here. This is a very important initiative that is intended to address the demographic shift as more and more of our citizens leave the workforce and retire. Life can be difficult for a senior, especially if they don't have a pension from an employer or retirement savings of their own.

I think again to my district. For 23 years I worked as a career and employment counsellor. I was fortunate on the Coast of Labrador to oversee five offices in that region. Like many of the offices in rural parts, what we did often was we went beyond our mandate. Many times it was not uncommon to see seniors coming in with mail or wanting something interpreted, wanting help with forms because they maybe had no family living around them. It maybe was only the Mr. and Mrs. in the home or maybe a widowed person living alone. We often heard the stories from them of the difficulty of balancing the books, juggling on their low income.

Although *Budget 2016* asked many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to pay more taxes, Mr. Speaker, we felt it would simply be too much to ask our low-income seniors who already face many challenges related to living on a fixed income. We didn't want to do that, Mr. Speaker. We wanted to find a way to be creative and to help those seniors.

That's why *Budget 2016* allocated an additional \$12.7 million – an additional, Mr. Speaker – to enhance the existing seniors' benefit because we recognize that we have an obligation as a government to protect these individuals. Although things are very tough right now in this province – we had a whole lot of good news today, and I'll speak about that in a minute. Even in this time of tight fiscal restraint, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we have a moral and an ethical obligation to do what we can to support this important group in our population.

Eligible seniors; I just think this is a wonderful part of this, Mr. Speaker, in that eligible seniors don't have to fill out complicated paperwork or navigate through any additional red tape. Again, going back to my 23 years of working in a small coastal community, many times, even at my house at 10 or 11 o'clock at night, somebody would come to my door because they knew they could. I opened my door and I embraced – can you help me with this form? Especially, Mr. Speaker, if it involved them receiving some kind of financial benefit. They were more stressed because they were worried they might fill it out incorrectly and they may not get the full amount of money they were entitled to.

Often, Mr. Speaker, when I've helped people with federal applications, we found out that they, in fact, were not getting their right amount of money. I'm thinking in particular of a senior couple in Cartwright who were struggling financially. When I sat down with them I saw they were not getting their right amount of money and I helped them. They think I'm the best thing since sliced bread. When all I really did, Mr. Speaker, was help them get access to what they were rightfully entitled to.

I think any seniors who are watching today, Mr. Speaker, I want them to not be stressed but to know that they will not have to fill out any paperwork because if they have filed a tax return for the year of 2015, their income is automatically assessed for eligibility. If they are determined to be eligible, they will receive the supplement in quarterly installments.

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Not only does our budget seek to take care of our province's vulnerable

seniors, but this year's eligible seniors will receive the highest amounts ever, Mr. Speaker, for the seniors' benefit. Because we were listening to the seniors when they talked to us about sometimes the difficult choices they had to make paying bills, feeding themselves and heating their home on a very limited budget.

This year, Mr. Speaker, up to 42,000 seniors will receive these benefits. Many of these seniors will also receive the new Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement. As we've heard today, Mr. Speaker, and I'll get to speak again at the end when we close debate, but as we've heard today, they will now not have to pay the levy. Fantastic news, thanks to our federal counterparts working with our Premier and working with our Finance Minister.

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Three out of every four people in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, now won't have to pay the levy.

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** If your net income is \$50,000 or less, you won't have to pay that temporary levy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

I'm up today –for those people just tuning in, this is a private Member's motion brought forward today by the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. It's a very interesting private Member's motion.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when we saw it I, kind of, questioned it. I really wasn't sure why they would bring forward this motion today. I began to do some research and it sounded vaguely familiar. It sounded somewhat familiar, almost like a motion that's been debated here in

the House before. When we started to dig into it and we looked into it we found out that, actually, this motion has been debated in the House here before, word for word. This motion has been debated in the House before. I'll just go back to it.

It's on November 27, 2013, the then Member for Exploits, Mr. Clayton Forsey – and I'm reading from Hansard. His resolution was: "BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's decision to provide the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit, a refundable tax credit for low-income seniors which, this year, is providing some ...." – now, here's what's really important, Mr. Speaker, this is what the resolution says. Everyone look at the resolution that's there before the House today, it says: "... providing some 42,000 seniors" – the same number that we're debating today – "in our Province with payments of up to \$971 – the highest amount ever."

It's the same number that we're debating today. The same numbers we're debating today. The Members opposite stand here and say look at the great increases we're doing for seniors and it's the same resolution that was debated in the House here in 2013, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. KENT:** The same resolution and same numbers?

**MR. P. DAVIS:** The same numbers, the same resolution, the same number of seniors, the same amount that we debated in this House in 2013, Mr. Speaker. Now there's more to the story because the trail of this follows a little bit further.

As part of *Budget 2014* I'll tell you what our government did. We increased it – we did. In *Budget 2014* – and I go back again, an excerpt from Hansard on March 27, 2014, when then minister of Finance, Minister Charlene Johnson said and I quote: "With this year's Budget, we are giving the fourth increase since 2003 to the Seniors' Benefit. As a result, the maximum payment seniors will receive in October 2014 will be the highest ever at \$1,036, up from \$971 in 2013."

So, Mr. Speaker, not only is the \$971 in today's resolution last year's numbers, it's been

increased since then. In 2014, the \$40.4 million budget for the program is more than five times higher than it was in 2013. About 42,000 seniors in our province receive benefits under the program each year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for the people tuned in at home who are saying, what is this about? In this year's budget, in *Budget 2016* the Liberal government opposite increased the Newfoundland and Labrador Low Income Seniors' Benefit to provide additional support to the province's seniors. The maximum amount under the Seniors' Benefit – and this is from this year's budget – will increase from \$1,063 to \$1,313, an increase of \$250. So that's an increase from the 2014 numbers that we increased to this year. About 48,000 households is what the budget documents say – 48,000 households. The resolution says 42,000 seniors, but the budget document says 48,000 households will benefits from these changes, including seniors who receive a higher benefit amount or receive a partial Seniors' Benefit for the first time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is an important matter. I really can't believe – I'm sure the Premier's office was hands on in this process. I don't lay this on the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair because I'm sure that it was with guidance from the Premier's office that she was given this resolution to do today.

It sounds to me like – from her comments in her 15 minutes when she spoke – that she wasn't aware that this motion was the same resolution brought to the House previously. It almost sounds like the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair was maybe set up by her own people. Maybe it was just an error, but why would they put her on her feet in the House of Assembly and embarrass her like that is beyond me.

I don't hold her accountable for this, Mr. Speaker. I don't. I don't. I think it's shameful what she was put up to do today, to stand here in her place and bring forward a resolution identical – except for one word – to what was brought here in the House in November 27, 2013 by the then private member, Mr. Clayton Forsey, PC member for Exploits at the time.

Mr. Speaker, this raises some serious problems because we heard in Question Period today – I asked the Premier questions today. And I'll stay on topic, Mr. Speaker, but the topic is and the problem with this motion is we asked questions today and we saw changes in answers as Question Period went on.

We know yesterday they lost a significant team member in the Premier's office as well. I'm wondering, I can't help but think to myself, is this reflective of the turmoil that is happening in government today? Is this because of that? Is this because of the turmoil that is happening within their own caucus today?

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

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

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm not sure what that was about.

Mr. Speaker, what we see here today now is turmoil that is happening and it is now impacting the work of government. It is now impacting the work and emotion that has come before the House here today. It draws the concern and I draw the concern because if this is an error – this is obviously an error that has taken place.

If this is an error that has taken place here today on a private Member's resolution, then should we as people of the province also be concerned about other decisions being made by government? If they put one of their own Members on her feet here in the House of Assembly to bring forward a resolution that was a duplicate of what was delivered here in the House in 2013 – new government, brand new government over there, been in less than six months with all these new ideas and they brought back the identical resolution from 2013.

They never had another private Member's resolution more important, more creative, more unique, more pressing, part of their promises that they made during the election campaign. They couldn't bring forward something new and different. They brought a copy of a resolution



from 2013, Mr. Speaker. That's what they did, and they put the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair to deliver it on their behalf.

**MR. KENT:** They didn't update the numbers?

**MR. P. DAVIS:** That's what happened. They didn't update the numbers. They didn't update the numbers from 2014. They didn't update the numbers from 2013. So 2013, there was a resolution brought here to the House; the same resolution, 2014 – which was an update by the way, Mr. Speaker. It was an update in 2013. There was an update again in 2014 by the minister of Finance of the day, Minister Johnson and brought an increase then even higher. Then as a result, there was the fourth increase in 2014 since 2003.

Granted, credit to them, they did increase it again in 2016. Good for them, but they couldn't even bring the right motion to the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, something that should be vetted and carefully thought out and carefully planned and reviewed and so on. As soon as we looked at it, we said there's a problem with this.

With all the staff that the Premier's office has, with all the staff the government caucus has, with all the officials in government in the Department of Finance, with all the people who work in government and work with them as a government, Mr. Speaker, nobody picked this up; or, if they did, they neglected to tell the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

Now, I expect the seconder on this was the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port. I believe it was, and I'm sure he'll speak on it this afternoon. I hope now that while I'm speaking on my time, because he got about six minutes left, that he'll have an opportunity to review this and maybe say to his caucus or to the Premier's office, who no doubt, at the very least would have approved and vetted this particular motion that this was the right thing.

They're going to have a few minutes, but I'm going to help them out, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to help them out.

**MR. KENT:** They're working fast, though.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Yes, they're working hard, and we'll give them time. I'll use my time. I'm not going to sit down short and abruptly so that they're not ready. I'll continue to speak. I'll use my time so they have time to prepare on what they're going to do here.

**MR. KENT:** Write an amendment.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Yes, they're probably writing an amendment, because it's wrong, it's simply wrong. There's no way we can support a resolution here in the House – Members opposite can't support a resolution in the House when they know the information is wrong. You can't do it.

You can't support your own resolution when you know the information is incorrect and inaccurate, because it goes from \$971 is what's on the resolution, when we know today as a result of the budget documents – unless the budget documents are wrong – it's increasing from \$1,063 to \$1,313, an increase of \$250. That's what the budget documents say, and the budget documents say 48,000 households instead of 42,000.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the problem with this resolution. That's the problem with this. There's no way people in the House can support it. It's really unfortunate that we have a Private Members' Day utilized on a regurgitation of a motion that we brought forward, the Member for Exploits brought forward November 27, 2013, and now they've put up their own Member.

Now, we know they have a lot of pressure over there, Mr. Speaker, we know that. There's a tremendous amount of pressure on government today. We're quite aware of that. We're copied on much of the information and emails and messages that are being communicated with the Members opposite.

We know they've gotten up, we saw today, on a petition. Their own Members are petitioning against their own government openly here in the House of Assembly. We know Members opposite are speaking privately, or speaking publicly and privately about changes that should be made. They're lobbying for changes to the budget, but to actually come in here in the House and present a motion that is essentially a

duplicate, except for one word, a duplicate of what was brought by the PC Member in 2013.

I think it's shameful and embarrassing for the Members opposite. An apology should go to the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair by whoever is responsible to put her up on this, set her up on this, or make her stand and talk on this. I think she's owed an apology. I anticipate the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port is going to speak to it as well. I believe that he is owed an apology as well.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to do him a favour today. We're going to propose an amendment to correct their information. We're going to do an amendment to correct their information. What I'm going to propose I believe is going to correct this.

I move, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl North, that the resolution be amended by deleting the number 42,000 that's in the current resolution and be substituted with the number 48,000.

We'll make this simple for them, Mr. Speaker, so that it matches with what should have been brought to the House here today.

Further, by deleting the figure \$971 and substitute a figure of \$1,313, which would reflect a \$250 increase. And by adding after the word "ever" a comma and the following words – so this would be an addition at the end of the resolution.

I'll read it all, Mr. Speaker, momentarily so we're all clear on what the amendment actually is, "but condemns the government's proposal to remove the home heating rebate and the HST rebate while imposing tax and fee increases that will leave seniors worse off."

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the resolution as amended. "BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's proposal to provide the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit a refundable tax credit for low income seniors, which this year is providing some 48,000 seniors in our province with payments of up to \$1,313, the highest amount ever, but condemns the government's proposal to remove the home heating rebate and the HST rebate

while imposing tax and fee increases that will leave seniors worse off."

I can table that for Members here in the House, Mr. Speaker. I would anticipate that you may want to take a recess, but if I can add – just before I finish up, Mr. Speaker. If I may, with your indulgence, just make a couple of comments.

We know Members are rising on their feet bringing petitions. They're speaking publicly and asking for changes. We know when it comes to seniors and this particular resolution, that one of the problems facing seniors is the home heating rebate and also the HST rebate which has been removed by the government opposite, which really puts seniors in a less of a position or a worse position. Therefore, we're adding that extra segment and part of the resolution saying that we condemn the government's proposal to remove the home heating rebate and HST rebate while imposing tax fees and increases. We all know about the tax and fee increases leaving seniors worse off.

I table that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The Speaker will take a short recess to review the amendment.

### Recess

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

Two issues I wish to deal with. First of all, there was an interruption from a Member on the government side while the Opposition Leader was speaking. I've mentioned on several occasions in this House that the Member identified to speak should be respected uninterrupted. So I remind the Member that it's not going to be tolerated that Members identified to speak be interrupted.

The amendment as put forward by the Leader of the Opposition is out of order as it contains a provision that is beyond the scope of the clause

that it is intended to amend. As well, O'Brien and Bosc goes on to say that an amendment must be relevant to the clause that it proposes to amend.

There are several instances within O'Brien and Bosc that would cause this amendment to be out of order. On page 533 is another. An amendment is out of order if it deals with a matter foreign to the main motion, exceeds its scope or introduces a new proposition.

So the amendment, as put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, is out of order.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

When you rose and ruled, I still had some time on the clock but I know the clock –

**MR. SPEAKER:** I believe there are 23 seconds.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Yes, Sir.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Twenty-eight seconds.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Twenty-eight seconds.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Sorry, 28 seconds.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Am I entitled to that?

**MR. SPEAKER:** You are indeed.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, what we have here before the House today, I want to reiterate was most unfortunate for the Liberal Party, the Liberal caucus to put one of their one Members up. I think it speaks to the turmoil that is underway in the government with their own caucus to have such a motion come forward, that is a duplicate of what was brought forward in 2013. They didn't even change the numbers from the budget numbers in 2013 to reflect their own.

According to the motion today, they are reducing the benefit to seniors, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

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

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

It is certainly an honour for me to stand in this House of Assembly again today, as it is every time that I stand, to represent the people who elected me last year and to speak on their behalf.

Certainly the intent of what we came here was to discuss the impacts and the benefits that seniors will accrue through *Budget 2016*. I'm going to do something today, Mr. Speaker, that the Members opposite continuously refuse to do day in and day out, and that's accept responsibility, that this was based on a human error of transmission. The Member opposite is completely right that we did not intend for this version to be tabled yesterday and I'm going to say to the Members opposite that we will be proposing an amendment to reflect the new numbers.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, we saw the righteous indignation of the Leader of the Official Opposition who claimed that we didn't know what we were doing and this side was in disarray, yet their own motions are never in order, Mr. Speaker.

We saw last week with Bill 1, they were up to seven or eight proposed amendments that they couldn't even get in order, Mr. Speaker. I say to the Members opposite it is time to accept responsibility for what they've done, but today –

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

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

**MR. BROWNE:** – it is squarely in my lap, Mr. Speaker, and I say the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair does bear no responsibility for

this and we will be tabling a proposed motion as follows:

I move, seconded by the hon. Member for St. George's – Humber, that the resolution be amended by deleting the number "42,000 seniors" and replacing it with the words "45,000 senior households," and further deleting the number "\$971" and replacing it with the number "\$1,313."

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

The Speaker will take a few moments to review this amendment to determine whether or not it's in order.

**MS. MICHAEL:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker (inaudible).

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, on a point of order.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes, it's been our understanding in our caucus that a private Member's motion may only have one amendment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** No, that's not correct, I say to the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi. We can only deal with one amendment at a time, but this previous amendment was ruled out of order, so we are able to accept the second amendment.

### Recess

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Speaker has reviewed the proposed amendment by the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue and the amendment is in order.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

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

It gives me pleasure to rise again and speak to the amended motion now that we will debate. I'd just like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that – as I said before, there was a fair degree and amount of righteous indignation thrown across the way towards the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au

Clair. I want to say, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair is one of the hardest working Members of this House.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** She advocates veraciously for her constituents and for the people of Labrador. Certainly, I don't think any of this should be put on her.

This mistake here, Mr. Speaker, it cost 10 cents to run a photocopy, which is more than I can say for the mistakes of the previous government which cost hundreds of millions of dollars, not the least of which would be Humber Valley Paving. They went right on through that. They had ferries over in Romania that cost all kinds of money in tariffs that could have been built down in Marystown, Mr. Speaker.

So there are all kinds of mistakes that people make, but I think the measure of any Member and the measure of any man or woman is admitting to them when you make one. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, this was pure human error. I think it's absolutely atrocious that the Members opposite chose to take their time today on the intent of this motion, which was to promote the well-being of seniors, to take it, to politicize it to the point where they did today.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to spend any more time debating the politics of the situation. I want to talk about the measures that seniors will benefit from in this budget. Since the budget – as I've said many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, I've been out in my district at events and in meetings with my constituents and talking to them, and there is a certain degree of people out there who are asking questions about, how will this impact me.

I think if anyone can look at this budget in its entirety, and I think looking at it in its entirety is important. I think it's important and noteworthy to reference that this is probably the first Question Period today where we didn't hear a question on the levy.

We know the Members opposite don't want to talk about the good relationship we have with our federal partners. They delivered, in terms of bringing enhanced aid to Newfoundland and

Labrador, so that this government could hold true to its commitment to ensure the levy was temporary. We know they don't want to talk about that, Mr. Speaker, and they obviously don't want to talk about the measures that seniors will have in this budget.

If you look at the different measures we're bringing forward, the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit will give over \$250 a year to seniors. I take an example, Mr. Speaker, of a senior couple. This would apply to many seniors living in my district. I have a rural district of some 45 communities. A senior couple making \$26,000 would avail of the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit by \$250, and the Income Supplement of \$510. These certainly are net benefits to what they would be receiving now, because we believe it's important that seniors have the respect and the supports they need.

The well-being of seniors for us is not a token thing. It's very important, which is why there's money in this budget for a seniors' advocate, which is something the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune calls a luxury. She can call it a luxury, but Members on this side of the House consider it something that's important and vital. That's why the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development has been such a strong advocate for seniors in this province, and that's why we're moving forward with plans for the seniors' advocate.

There are other measures in this budget, Mr. Speaker, on top of the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit. We have approximately \$3.5 million to support the placement of select individuals with enhanced care needs in a personal care home. As I've said, we have the \$250,000 investment for a new seniors' advocate office. We have \$300,000 for the Seniors' Resource Centre to enhance its information and referral system. We have \$300,000 for age-friendly transportation services. We have a new director of Adult Protection to reduce risk to adults in need of protection.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** We have \$100,000 to support continued development of age-friendly –

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

I would ask the Member to try to keep his comments relevant to the motion put forward.

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

The motion put forward today is for us as a House to resolve ourselves to support the Seniors' Benefit. I'll go back to that, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's truly important. I encourage anyone with questions in my district to contact my office and ask any questions that they so desire. It's really important that the information gets out there.

A single senior, Mr. Speaker, with an income of \$16,000 would get the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit by \$250, as well as the Income Supplement. They would also benefit from not only these changes but the federal changes as well.

There are now more people in Canada over the age of 65 than there are under the age of 15. Our population in this province is rapidly aging. Newfoundland and Labrador by 2036, just one generation from now, Mr. Speaker, our province is expected to have the highest percentage of seniors in the country, at 31 per cent. That's more than one in four individuals.

When we talk about seniors, Mr. Speaker, I guess for me I'm certainly not within the senior's age bracket, but I think of them as the people who helped build this society to where we are today, the people who built communities and built families. My grandmother alone had 13 children, my other one had six. Many stories in this House can be shared of how many families were born in this province as a result of the seniors who are currently living today.

In fact, I was just in Monkstown this weekend, Mr. Speaker, and there was a man who turned 105. They deserve our support. They deserve the recognition of the importance of taking care of our seniors.

As a government, we hosted a number of engagement sessions, including back in 2014 soliciting feedback from our province's seniors and other stakeholder groups. The feedback we got in those Let's Connect sessions went on to form our platform.

We are still guided, Mr. Speaker, by that feedback today. *Budget 2016* contains a number of items that were created on the basis of this grassroots engagement. As I said, we proposed the enactment of the seniors' advocate and we are also bringing forward the Seniors' Benefit, which I believe is a very positive step, Mr. Speaker. The enhancement of the Seniors' Benefit, seniors will benefit. They will have more money in their pockets to help them with the expenses they have. I think that is a tremendously good thing that we can all be proud of.

This motion today, the intent was not to divide the House, Mr. Speaker. It was that we could all speak to the benefit of bringing forth measures to enhance the lives of seniors and we could all speak collectively in support of them.

We are truly committed to ensuring that our seniors have the supports they need. Seniors have diverse care needs and face many challenges that can be enhanced by the Seniors' Benefit. A seniors' advocate as an on-the-ground resource for seniors is a good example of how that is a good resource for seniors.

We know that life can be very difficult for a senior, Mr. Speaker. The example I just gave of a single senior with \$16,000 of income. When you look at that there are 12 months in a year. That's just a little over \$1,000 a month. That's not a lot. We have seniors out there trying to maintain their homes. Trying to make sure they live comfortably at home in their communities for as long as they can. The objective of the enhanced Seniors' Benefit is to ensure they can do that for as long as they can.

I can remember standing on a doorstep in Arnold's Cove actually during the election, Mr. Speaker, and an elderly women saying to me: I want to be able to stay at home as long as I can, independently, as much as I can. Those words stuck with me because I had such a great admiration and a love of my own grandparents who were people who had worked hard in their lives and who had come to a place in their life where they needed as much help as they could get. I looked at that senior and I said: Anything I can do, any help that I can provide, I certainly will.

I think of all the measures in this budget – yes, there were very tough decisions, Mr. Speaker, some of which can be debated, but I think the enhanced Seniors' Benefit, in my mind, is something we can all agree on. It's a good thing for the seniors in our province. It's certainly a good thing for many of our rural areas that are populated with higher numbers of seniors than perhaps urban areas.

I think it's really important, as Members of this Chamber, Members of this House, the representatives of Newfoundland and Labrador, that we take the time to acknowledge the fact that this particular measure contained within in our budget is positive. It's going to help a great number of people, Mr. Speaker.

That's why in *Budget 2016* we have allocated the additional \$12.7 million to enhance the existing Seniors' Benefit because we recognize, as a government, not only as a government but all Members of this House, we have an obligation to those who came before us to try our very hardest to ensure they are protected, to ensure they have the services they need. Indeed, it is a tough challenge sometimes, particularly in rural areas, to provide those services and to ensure there is a quality of service everywhere in the province.

That's why it is, I believe, a very good thing that we are going to be enhancing the Seniors' Benefit to the point that not only will they get the one payment in the fall, it will be spread over quarterly payments now. If you look at it on its whole, eligible seniors no longer have to fill out complicated paperwork that was the case in the past. We're reinvesting dollars into seniors, and as long as they file their tax return for the year 2015, under the Seniors' Benefit, their income is automatically assessed for eligibility. As I've said, if they are determined to be eligible, then they will receive that in quarterly installments.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I'm in full support of the amended resolution. As I've said again, I believe the mover of this motion, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, has done an outstanding job and outstanding work, not only in this session of the House but in the last one, standing up for her constituents, especially seniors. I support the motion 100 per cent. I believe it's important that seniors are given the

due they are owed by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will be there. I told the seniors in my district that we will be there to help them whenever we have to. As I've said, Mr. Speaker, those are the people that built up Newfoundland and Labrador. They built our communities, our families. Those are the people and the reasons why we can stand here today and enjoy the promise that we do today.

I will take my seat now, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for the time.

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

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

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

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

What an interesting day in the House of Assembly. It's never dull that's for sure, but very interesting today.

The previous speaker said that this was simply an error in transmission and that one should admit when they make mistakes. Well, I'm glad that government is acknowledging that they made a mistake today. Even in doing so, they can't help but continue to play the blame game.

Mr. Speaker, none of us are perfect and mistakes happen. It is important to acknowledge them. A mistake was definitely made here today because we find ourselves debating – the original motion that we're debating this afternoon was presented by Clayton Forsey in November 2013 with the exception of one word, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out earlier today.

We attempted to amend the motion, albeit unsuccessfully. Government has now proposed an amendment that's in order and we will vote both on the amendment but also on the original motion, whether it's amended or not amended. I suspect with the government majority that the amendment will pass and we'll vote on the amended resolution.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the numbers in the amended resolution still don't match the numbers that were presented in the budget documents a number of weeks ago. The \$1,313 comes right out of the budget documents, even though it wasn't in the original motion today. Let me quote one of the budget documents here: "About 48,000 households will benefit from these changes, including seniors who receive a higher benefit amount or receive a partial Seniors' Benefit for the first time."

So this is right in the section of the budget documents entitled Seniors' Benefit, yet in this motion today the amended resolution that was brought in by the Liberal Member who just spoke talks about some 45,000 households. So the numbers still aren't right. One of the numbers is wrong. Is it the number in this amended resolution, or is the number in the budget document?

Mr. Speaker, it should be possible to pull the numbers straight out of the budget documents, and one would trust that the numbers in the budget documents were well researched and are accurate. It may seem like a minor point, but we're talking about 3,000 households. So is the number in the budget document incorrect, or is the number in this amended resolution incorrect? Did government overestimate the number of seniors that would benefit from this Seniors' Benefit?

One of the things I find really challenging in this House is that when they're not on camera, government Members will often shout across the House about Opposition research staff, questioning our approach or our tactics or the issues that we're raising in the House, but they're rather quiet today.

The fact that they copied and pasted a resolution that we presented back in November 2013 suggests that they don't have any new ideas, they don't have any plan, they're not presenting anything original to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Beyond the issues with the motion today and the parliamentary procedure that we're discussing here, I think we've really got to highlight that while the Seniors' Benefit is a good initiative that we brought in several years ago, and it has

benefited thousands of seniors in our province, you have to consider all of the additional costs, all of the additional burden that's being placed on seniors as a result of this budget: gas taxes increasing dramatically, as we debated in this House yesterday; insurance costs are going up considerably, which will impact all seniors who pay insurance as well; the cost of food is going to rise as a result of this budget, and more families, and in particular, more seniors are going to be driven into poverty as a result of this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I could also talk about long-term care and the impact of this budget on seniors. So we're talking about how today in this resolution how the budget is good for seniors, yet this government is reducing the number of long-term care beds for seniors while hundreds of people in our province wait for long-term care today. It just doesn't make any sense.

I've had complaints and concerns from various residents of my own district and from around the province who are also concerned that private pay rates in these long-term care facilities are going up as well. There have been many cuts that will negatively impact seniors, so to celebrate the Seniors' Benefit without acknowledging how devastating this budget is overall for seniors is just irresponsible and we can't do that. Even if the original motion is one that we voted on 2½ years ago, we can't celebrate this budget today. We just can't.

Beyond cuts to long-term care, I'm getting bombarded with communication from citizens who are concerned about cuts to the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program. There are now drugs that are not going to be covered as a result of this budget. Cuts to the adult dental plan, seniors are not going to be able to get the dental care they need.

So it's great that a number of seniors will now have an additional \$250 in their pockets as a result of this benefit, but that happens to be almost the exact amount that used to be in the Home Heating Rebate which has been eliminated in this budget.

What the government has done here this afternoon or what they've done in their budget is simply moved money around. There is no new

investment for seniors. There is no new dollars in the pockets of seniors. In fact, seniors are going to be worse off as a result of this budget, and that has to be acknowledged, Mr. Speaker.

The increase of \$250 has been wiped out just with the elimination of the Home Heating Rebate alone. So while the Finance Minister would like to tell you that this is new money, it isn't new money. Most households would have received approximately \$250 from the Home Heating Rebate. That was a valuable program and it has been eliminated in this budget. Now, I guess those dollars have been rolled into the Seniors' Benefit.

So while the Finance Minister likes to trump enhanced new funding, many seniors will not receive any more than they did previously. And I would argue that all seniors who live on fixed incomes will be worse off as a result of this budget. There are new fees, new taxes, an increase in insurance tax, an increase in gas tax, so many seniors will be worse off under this budget.

The Seniors' Benefit is one of the few things that the Finance Minister repeatedly points to in defending the budget, which just amazes me. They're cancelling the HST credit and they're cancelling the Home Heating Rebate. These two programs that were key features of our plan would have assisted seniors and, in fact, they would have assisted all low-income individuals.

The HST credit that's being cut was \$300 per eligible individual, \$60 per qualifying relation, \$60 per qualifying dependant and the net family income had to be less than \$30,000. That's been eliminated.

The Home Heating Rebate has been eliminated. It was a maximum \$250 rebate for families with an income less than \$35,000. There was a \$500 maximum rebate for coastal Labrador which made sense. There was a smaller rebate for families between \$35,000 and \$40,000 in household income.

So my point, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to this motion today is that the extra \$250 that the minister likes to trump is not new money at all. This is money that the Liberals rolled into the



program from other programs that they cancelled.

Mr. Speaker, seniors are not better off; they're worse off. That's why we can't support this charade today. It's bad enough they couldn't get the motion right. It's bad enough they copied and pasted a motion from 2013 and didn't even update the numbers. Now in the revised motion, one of the numbers is still incorrect or the number in the budget is wrong.

Beyond the Home Heating Rebate and the HST credit being eliminated, you have to factor in some of the extra fees that seniors will now have to pay: increases to personal income tax, tax on insurance, gasoline tax and more. Many seniors are now wondering can they afford to live as a result of this budget. So the Seniors' Benefit that we're talking about today unfortunately is cold comfort to them.

Members opposite will say we're just playing politics. We're not the only ones saying that this budget is bad for seniors. Dan Meades, the provincial coordinator for the Transition House Association in our province, who's also an anti-poverty advocate, has said that – he says, "My math says that this budget sure does hurt people in poverty." He called the budget regressive and said that it disproportionately charged low-income workers more. We have many seniors in our province that would be in that low-income category.

These regressive increases in this budget aren't offset by the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement or the Seniors' Benefit. They don't offset the budget impacts to low-income residents.

Now, let's talk about what the Finance Minister said. As I said, one of her only defences of the budget is the point of the Seniors' Benefit and the Income Supplement. She said, "We believe that the supplement is providing relief for those individuals who are at the lowest income levels in our province." However, she failed to recognize all the fees and taxes and increases that these people now will have to pay.

She forgot the services that have been cut for seniors in this province, cuts to libraries – a lot of people who use libraries in this province are

seniors. Cuts to the Adult Dental Program, cuts to the Prescription Drug Program just to give a few examples that we're hearing about at our offices every day and I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that government Members are receiving those kinds of calls, emails and letters as well.

Most of the calls that I've been receiving about the budget are from seniors who have been impacted by cuts to the Adult Dental Program or the drug program. They are also library users; they've lost many valuable services. And this Seniors' Benefit that we're talking about today, this increase doesn't offset those losses.

So back to the Finance Minister, she actually said, "We believe we've done a good job to mitigate most of the impact and make sure those people are held whole." She actually said that, but it's factually incorrect, Mr. Speaker. She believes they've done a good job to ensure the budget doesn't negatively impact them, but I have to argue that point, Mr. Speaker. Seniors don't agree with that statement. The seniors I talk to certainly don't agree with that statement. Mr. Meades, the anti-poverty advocate, doesn't agree with that statement, and I don't agree with that statement.

Both the Premier and the Finance Minister have stood in this House and have said that there are people who will be better off under this budget, but they haven't given us any examples. And for Members to stand and say that seniors are going to be better off, I challenge that, Mr. Speaker. It's factually incorrect. It's false information.

When reporters scammed the Finance Minister in early May they asked her that exact question. She couldn't answer at the time. She couldn't give examples of which people will be better off because of this budget. So while the Income Supplement and the Seniors' Benefit allocate money to those who need it most – and those are good things, a Seniors' Benefit is a good thing, the Income Supplement is a good thing, but it doesn't offset the budget increases. So when you look at the overall impact of what's happened to seniors through this budget, it's bad.

So I would challenge the minister – and there'll still be opportunity in debate today – to tell us how many people will be better off under this budget and who are they because they're not

seniors in our province. Are there seniors in our province who are better off because of this budget? I don't think so.

I only have a couple of minutes left but the Newfoundland and Labrador 50+ Federation is also speaking out against this budget and its impact on low-income individuals, especially seniors. Mr. Rogers, the president of the Federation wrote: Seniors are among our most vulnerable and are the heart of our province – it is shameful that the Premier and Finance Minister and the Minister Responsible for Seniors have shown no concern for people and have made budget decisions which will be harmful to seniors. We are dismayed and concerned about the impacts that the Liberals budget choices will mean to many of our seniors. We are receiving calls from seniors every day worried about they will pay their bills.

So the 50+ Federation understands the impact that this budget will have on seniors and that's why this increase to the Seniors' Benefit doesn't offset all those other hits – it just doesn't. The negative budget impacts are not offset by the \$250 increase. As I have said, Mr. Speaker, the home heat rebate going away alone, offsets any increase to this Seniors' Benefit. Fee increases, tax increases, it's all disastrous to seniors and the 50+ Federation has acknowledged that. They're receiving all kinds of calls as well.

We did present an alternative to this. In *Budget 2015* we presented the increased HST credit. We increased the funding from \$40 to \$300 per person. That's now been wiped out. Amounts were also increased for spouses and dependants. The Liberals would have been wise to keep this, but they didn't.

We were strong advocated of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program and the adult dental plan. We know how much these programs were used. We committed to keeping them in place. We knew how important those programs were for seniors in our province. Each one of us has helped seniors access those programs, but the Liberals have taken another approach.

Mr. Speaker, their budget was lazy. They didn't consider the impact it would have on seniors.

They didn't consider the impact it would have on real people.

It's outrageous that we're debating a motion that was first presented in November 2013. It shows how reckless and how much in turmoil this Liberal government is. I think it's shameful what's happening in this Legislature today.

Thank you.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

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

It's a pleasure to rise here today and speak to the private Member's resolution as presented by the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. Yes, there was some confusion. I believe that was certainly acknowledged by the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue. Just to clarify, and for those who maybe tuning in now, I'll read the amended resolution to this private Member's resolution here today.

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's decision to provide the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit, a refundable tax credit for low-income seniors, which this province is providing some 45,000 senior households in our province with payments of up to \$1,313 – the highest amount ever.

Now, we did acknowledge there was some confusion around the motion earlier and that was amended. I would actually like to thank the Member for Topsail – Paradise, the Official Leader of the Opposition, for bringing that up. That's what the Opposition's job is to do, to hold us accountable and make corrections and suggestions when necessary.

I'm not so sure about him spending his entire speaking about our mistake. I believe we've acknowledged that mistake and the important part about today is to talk about the Seniors' Benefit and the provisions in the budget which are beneficial to seniors.

The Member for Mount Pearl North had just made a few statements I'd like to just kind of correct or give some more context around, it you will. In particular, the benefit of \$250 increase for the Seniors' Benefit, you said that essentially replaces the Home Heating Rebate. Well, in some regard it does, to the Member for Mount Pearl North, however –

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

**MR. FINN:** – and that's fine.

The \$250 rebate, that's a \$250 maximum. What you also need to take into consideration is that not all seniors would qualify for the Home Heating Rebate. In fact if you were renting and your heat was included in your rental costs, you wouldn't have qualified for the Home Heating Rebate.

Now with the introduction of the Seniors' Benefit, all seniors will qualify for this particular benefit. In addition to that, the administration of the Home Heating Rebate was quite costly and with our introduction here we are actually saving funds in that regard and, yes, this does account for \$250. But, in addition to that, there is another benefit for seniors which you did not mention at all; that's the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement benefit that will also be provided to our seniors.

A couple other provisions I'd like to touch on – and I don't have a whole lot of time due to some amendments here today to speak and we are anticipating the Member for Cartwright –L'Anse au Clair to close on the debate. We have the healthy living assessments. Under the Department of Health right now we are looking at assessments to keep seniors in their home longer and that will reduce costs on our health care system and reduce costs to long-term care.

We have \$2 million in the budget for exploring and planning options for long-term care facilities in Western Newfoundland, as well as Central Newfoundland. That is a direct benefit for our seniors. We're looking at long-term planning and we're looking towards our future and while there was some tough decisions in this budget, there are certainly some great provisions for seniors. Because we need to understand right

now what the next 10, 20, 30 years are going to bring.

When we look at our demographics right now, even in the country as a whole, there are more people over the age of 65 than there are under the age of 15. Our population is rapidly, rapidly aging. We're expected to have the highest percentage of seniors in the country in just 20 years from now. The highest percentage of seniors in the country will be in Newfoundland and Labrador in 20 years from now.

So when you look at long-term planning and correcting the fiscal mess that we're facing right now, because we're anticipating costs to seniors, we're anticipating extra cost to our health care system, so right now taking the measures that we have, we're looking towards the future and, in doing so, we are putting these provisions in place to ensure the most vulnerable are not affected.

The Member for Mount Pearl North, as well as the Member for Topsail – Paradise, also mentioned some of the fee increases that are going to be drastic to the seniors. Well if you look at the fee increase budget document, you will in fact see that seniors are exempt from several fee increases, particularly around driver's licence and driver's registration. They are exempt from those fee increases. So I'm not sure where they are going with fee increases. Perhaps a \$2 ticket increase to an Arts and Culture Centre show or something may play a factor there, I'm not quite sure. But you can't just say all these fee increases as in all-encompassing as a whole.

In addition to that, our government has committed to an office of the seniors' advocate. That's a statutory office similar to that of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. The seniors' advocate office is important. I think that's a very important measure that we've put in place as there needs to be a particular venue for their voices to be heard.

In addition to the seniors' advocate office, the Seniors Resource Centre; this budget allocates some \$300,000 to the Seniors Resource Centre. That's going to enhance the referral and information system because oftentimes, trying to navigate these systems and trying to navigate

where benefits are and what services you can access becomes a bit time consuming and can be confusing for some and particularly seniors. So the office of the seniors' advocate as well as enhanced and increased funding to the Seniors Resource Centre is certainly meant to alleviate some of that burden.

In addition to that, today we had a great announcement in partnership with our federal counterparts with respect to the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. This measure came in place as a direct result of the work of our MPs of this province in terms of their lobby efforts and looking at ways in which they can help Newfoundland and Labrador right now. I certainly applaud them for their efforts in doing that.

As a direct result, the threshold now for the temporary Deficit Levy is \$50,000. I would wager to believe most seniors in this province will certainly not be subject to the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. Further, it speaks volumes to the fact that we called it temporary to begin with. We called it temporary and we said we would remove this as soon as we had an opportunity to do so. Over the last course of the couple of weeks, with the efforts from our Members of Parliament, we've now been presented with the opportunity to do that and we've done just that.

Also, our federal government counterparts have introduced measures in their budget, which came down in March, which also have direct benefits for our seniors and that will be a top-up to the Guaranteed Income Supplement. We also have funding from the federal government that's going to look at ways in which every province in the country can leverage funds for affordable housing.

Our federal counterparts have committed to a review of CPP – and CPP contributions and how that works. Further, the federal government has also decreased the Old Age Security, the OAS eligibility age, which was previously going to go up to 67 and brought it right back down and held through on their promise to keep it at 65.

In looking at some of the provisions that the federal government has made to help seniors, we certainly followed suit on that. The

Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement benefit is one; the enhanced Seniors' Benefit is another. With the Seniors' Benefit as well, our government held some round-table discussions back in 2014 and went around and spoke to some of the seniors in the province. One thing that they pointed out with the Seniors' Benefit was they said we get this fee annually. We get this lump sum every fall, usually around October, of approximately \$900. It could be up to \$1,000. Well, it's a great benefit and it's a great chunk of money at that particular time of the year, but what seniors told us is this. They said, one lump sum fee in October doesn't help me out the rest of the year.

So what we've done is we've gone ahead with quarterly installments. Based on this budget, with respect to the first two installments, they'll essentially mirror the amount they would get in the fall, the \$900 to \$1,000 figure, depending on income – it would be anywhere from \$850 to \$1,000 come the fall for your first payment. Further, seniors will then see another payment in January. Then they'll see another payment in April, another one in July, and then again in the fall. So we're spreading out the funds over the course of the year in quarterly installments specifically to help them get through the year.

With respect to seniors, I have great respect for seniors. Both of my parents are seniors. I don't know if they'd be happy if I pointed that out here, but it is a fact. I've spent a number of years working directly with seniors and particularly with seniors around affordable housing and affordable housing concerns.

In fact, just a couple of years ago I helped a landlord developer in the Stephenville – Port au Port District review the Affordable Housing Initiative agreement and apply for funding through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to build affordable housing units for seniors. The 'tenplex' that was built was just constructed in the Town of Kippens. Certainly a tremendous benefit to seniors there, and of course, under the Affordable Housing Initiative the whole intent is to provide seniors with an affordable place to live and maintain those rental rates for a period of time.

With respect to seniors as well, the Member for Torngat Mountains really puts a good lens on

things, when I get the chance to have a conversation with him – and the Aboriginal lens, in particular. The Aboriginal lens always looks at respecting your elders. It always looks at respecting your elders and looking after those who have gotten you where you are here today. I certainly think we took that into consideration when we delivered this budget. That's why we came up with the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit, the Income Supplement benefit, amongst other provisions, including the Seniors' Advocate Office as well.

I just want to point out that as much as there can be some negativity with respect to the Opposition and taking away uncertain points, there certainly is a lot of good in this budget and there's certainly a lot of good news for seniors. To those I've spoken with, they certainly are welcome to the fact that this fund, under the Seniors' Benefit, will be spread out over the course of the year.

As that, Mr. Speaker, my time is running short.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

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

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

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

I will take a few minutes now to close debate on this PMR. It would be incumbent on me to start with there was a mistake here today, Mr. Speaker, but I'm not going to spend 15 minutes talking about that mistake because it's taking away from the focus of what we're doing to help seniors.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes human error occurs. My colleague here did a very good job explaining that, but I have to respond to comments across the way about my being set up by my team. How ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, my being set up by my team. I'm quite comfortable and happy that anybody here on this side, Mr. Speaker – and we've had a growing number, I've been here three years – certainly would support me and do whatever they could for me, and I say that with –

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I say that, Mr. Speaker, with a great deal of confidence.

I want to thank the speakers today, Mr. Speaker, who spoke on the motion. The Member for Topsail – Paradise, the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, the Member for Mount Pearl North and the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate some of the good things in the budget – the budget was tough, there is no doubt about that, but what we're doing here today is we're highlighting some of the positive things, and in particular the positive things for those who would be the most vulnerable in our society.

So \$12.7 million annualized to enhance the existing Seniors' Benefit – \$12.7 million. The increased Seniors' Benefit and the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement will replace the following: the Home Heating Rebate and the provincial harmonized sales tax, replacing that.

I'm going to give a couple of examples for those who might be watching, those who are fearful they are going to have less. We've done lots of calculations and people will see. I'm assured that once the cheques start coming that in many cases they will be better off.

Mr. Speaker, a senior couple with a net income of \$26,000 would receive now an average annual supplement of \$510; a Seniors' Benefit of the highest amount \$1,313. That materializes to quarterly installments of \$455.75.

Mr. Speaker, I'm certain when I especially reflect on the seniors, of course, that I'm most familiar with, the seniors who live in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. When I think about the income that comes into most of their homes and the cost of living, a cheque showing up quarterly for \$455.75 will certainly be a benefit to them.

Another example, Mr. Speaker, we could have a senior who has a net income of \$17,000. I also have lots like that in my district. His or her income is less than \$29,402, so they would be

eligible, again, to receive the maximum amount of \$1,313. A senior who has a net income of \$17,000 would be eligible to receive the maximum amount which would be paid out in quarterly installments, Mr. Speaker.

The Low Income Seniors' Benefit has been around since '99, but through *Budget 2016* there have been some significant enhancements made. A \$12.7 million annualized to enhance the existing benefit.

For those watching who might be wondering when they're receiving payment, July 2016 and October 2016. The first payment will include two quarterly payments and the next payment will be in January 2017 and then, of course, April 2017.

We see the low Income Supplement will be increased by more than \$250. I'm sure that's very good news. Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the Low Income Seniors' Benefit, but in addition to that we have the new Income Supplement which many of them will benefit from.

As we heard this morning, the temporary reduction levy is now moved up to \$50,000 in net income. That will be a significant help to seniors. Three of four people in our province now will not pay, including the seniors that we are talking about here today.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate, we remain committed to the seniors in this province. While we're faced still with some steep challenges as we address our deficit and things like that, we will continue to work with our federal counterparts. We will continue to work hard at our own caucus table, as a team, as we try and wade through this financial crisis in the province. We always do it, Mr. Speaker, looking through the lens of the most vulnerable. Looking through the lens of the low income, the people with disabilities, the people who have multiple challenges, and we'll continue to do that as we govern in the best way we can in this terrible fiscal situation on behalf of the people we represent in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

All in favour of the amendment put forward by the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The amendment is passed.

All those in favour of the motion, as amended?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Those against?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion, as amended, has been passed.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Division is called.

### Division

**MR. SPEAKER:** Are the Whips ready?

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

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

All in favour of the motion, as amended, please rise.

**CLERK:** Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Trimper, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Browne, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Edmunds, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Bragg, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Warr, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King.

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

**CLERK:** Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Brazil, Ms. Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Ms. Michael, Ms. Rogers.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 23; the nays: 8.

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

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

I declare the motion, as amended, passed.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow  
at 1:30 in the afternoon.