



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

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OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

Tuesday

28 March 2017
(Throne Speech)

The House met at 2 p.m.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Please be seated.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mr. Speaker, the Justices of the Supreme Court have arrived.

MR. SPEAKER: Admit the Justices of the Supreme Court.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has arrived.

MR. SPEAKER: Admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(Mr. Speaker leaves the Chair.)

(His Honour the Lieutenant Governor takes the Chair.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that all present be seated.

HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (Frank F. Fagan, CM, ONL, MBA):

The Way Forward to Greater Prosperity

It is my pleasure to open the second session of the 48th General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I offer a warm welcome to all Members of the House of Assembly, who have been elected to represent the good people of our province. I wish you well in your forthcoming deliberations in this chamber.

This is a time of national commemoration and celebration.

2017 marks the **150th anniversary of Confederation and the Birth of Canada.**

This year we also celebrate the **35th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, which protected our rights and freedoms as Canadians in the Constitution of Canada.

It is not only fitting but imperative that we celebrate these rights. The right to democratic government. The right to freedom of thought and expression. And the right to peaceful assembly. These are values we uphold as Canadians. I encourage you all to take part in the many activities being planned this year to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday, including free access to Canada's national parks, national marine conservation areas and national historic sites.

Indeed, as we celebrate Canada 150, we ought to reflect on the sacrifices made by those who fought to protect our rights, freedoms and sovereignty as a nation.

Last year marked the 100th anniversary of the battle of Beaumont Hamel, when approximately 800 men left their trenches on July 1st, and only 68 answered the roll call the following morning.

This year, we commemorate such battles as the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge, a pivotal battle for Canada and its Allies, and the 100th anniversary of Monchy-le-Preux, where nine Newfoundland Regiment soldiers and one British soldier held off over 200 German soldiers for over 10 hours after losing 485 men.

In recognition of the bravery of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, in December 1917, His Majesty King George V honoured the Newfoundland Regiment with a new title, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. This was the sole occasion that any regiment was so honoured during the First World War and only the third wartime designation of the title in British history.

Honour 100 commemorated Newfoundland and Labrador's First World War story. More than 60 projects were made possible by Honour 100 funding, including Opera on the Avalon's First World War opera, called "Ours," as well as a visit by dozens of students to Beaumont Hamel to trek the Trail of the Caribou first-hand and to learn a story that should never be forgotten.

We also recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the women during the First World War, serving as nurses or with the Voluntary Aid Detachment abroad, and holding the fort at home while almost 36 per cent of our men aged 19 to 35 went to war. The Women's Patriot Association raised money, knitted socks, sweaters and scarves for troops. It is estimated that women's work contributed over \$500,000 to the war effort at that time.

To say the war impacted those who lived through it is an understatement. One notable and positive impact was on the women's movement, as their contributions to the war effort were recognized, helping fuel the suffrage movement, which ultimately led to women winning the right to vote and run for political office in 1925 in our province.

2017 also marks a number of other anniversaries for our province.

Legend has it that John Cabot returned to England from the Grand Banks with stories of how plentiful the cod was in our waters. For centuries, our stocks have attracted international fleets, and indeed, many of our ancestors settled along our rugged coasts to fish. The fishery, and particularly, the cod fishery, was formative in our economy and our identity.

2017 marks the 25th anniversary of the cod moratorium, a Federal Government response to dangerously depleted cod stocks. The moratorium put 30,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians out of work, kick-started youth outmigration en masse, and shone a light on the socio-economic consequences of not managing and maximizing our resources.

On this, the 25th anniversary, we are cautiously optimistic about the return of cod and the ground fishery. It is fitting that we mark this anniversary with reflection on what led to the moratorium that, in turn, depleted our greatest resource: our people.

2017 also marks the 20th anniversary since first oil at Hibernia. Just five years had passed since the Federal Government imposed the cod moratorium, marking a pivotal shift in our economy. Suddenly, oil replaced cod as the

leading industry, attracting multi-national oil and gas companies the world over.

It is valuable to reflect on this. First oil at Hibernia just five years after the end of the cod fishery shows us how quickly things can turn around. Our experiences in both the cod fishery and oil have taught us that natural resources are precious commodities that need to be managed carefully to the maximum benefit of the people, and that requires a long-term view.

Our Government is focused on building a sustainable future. A future with a stronger economic foundation. As we reflect on our history as a province and as a nation, we are together building on our narrative of resilience and resourcefulness. This resilience and resourcefulness is exactly what we need to harness to build a stronger tomorrow.

We identify strongly and proudly as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. In an increasingly globalized world, we continue to position ourselves as world-class performers and partners, harnessing the perseverance it has taken to survive in the harsh North Atlantic to compete and win no matter the challenge before us. Last year, we celebrated such successes as Katarina Roxon winning Paralympic gold in the 100-metre breaststroke in Rio. In January, with a record score, Kaetlyn Osmond of Marystown won her third national figure skating title.

As well, incredible athletes from our province earned medals at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria. Sandra Smith of Carbonear, Crystal Young of Harbour Grace, Justin Dodge of Grand Bank and Floressa Harris of Gander brought the province together in celebration just a few days ago.

From Rio to Torino to Ramsau, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have set out on their own personal journeys and achieved the unimaginable – bringing home Olympic Gold. Both abroad and at home, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not only competing on national and international stages, they are winning.

Ladies and gentlemen, just two weeks ago, Team Gushue stepped out on home ice under the weight of the province's hope. The Brier showcased to the nation and the world our

hospitality and our culture – two fundamental aspects of our identity as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The last shot of the championship curling game rested on the dreams of his teammates, and the hopes of our province. In a sea of red, in a breadth of baited silence, in that final sweep, rushed a collective sense of pride and achievement. Team Gushue did not buckle under the pressure of a national championship game on home ice. They rose above it. They won. And in that perfect moment, when something that seemed too good to be true happened, we all won.

On the heels of Team Gushue's 2017 Brier victory came another Newfoundland and Labrador curling milestone. The Memorial University Sea Hawk's team, skipped by Adam Boland, won the USports Men's Curling Canada Championship with a victory over the University of Alberta.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are being recognized not only for sport, but also for their business acumen.

Recognized as the best of 60 teams in Canada eight times, Enactus Memorial, a student-run organization of creative entrepreneurs supported by Memorial University's Faculty of Business Administration, took home their second World Cup in 2016. Enactus Memorial outperformed teams from 33 countries and 1,700 campuses, and 69,000 participants worldwide. Enactus Memorial creates innovative, local and sustainable solutions to global economic challenges. Their winning enterprise, called Project SucSeed, partners with Memorial's Faculty of Engineering and employs at-risk youth through Choices for Youth to build hydroponic systems from recycled materials for produce production. Project SucSeed is helping to make healthy food more accessible and affordable, a particular challenge in rural and remote communities, is helping to improve our food security and health outcomes as a province overall and is supporting social enterprise in the province.

Our artistic and creative talents are also receiving accolades worldwide.

Adapted from local writer Wayne Johnston's award-winning novel of the same name, *Colony*

of Unrequited Dreams just completed a two-week run at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Written by Robert Chafe and directed by Jillian Kielley, themselves local success stories, the play brings the story of Newfoundland's first premier and Canada's last founding father Joey Smallwood and the story of Confederation to the national stage. Upon its debut, *The Globe and Mail* called *Colony of Unrequited Dreams* "the type of meaty yet moving work about this country that audiences should be hungry for this year."

Theatre audiences are also enjoying stories of more contemporary Newfoundlanders and Labradorians this year. Irene Sankoff and David Hein's musical *Come from Away*, tells a story of how the people of Gander and surrounding areas opened their arms to the world on September 11, 2001. There is no better reflection of the compassion and welcoming spirit of the people of our province than how they responded by opening their homes and hearts in the days following those tragic terrorist attacks. During an event that reverberated around the world, our participation was revered in such a touching way. With performances in Gander, Toronto, California, Seattle, Washington, D.C., and now Broadway, *Come from Away* is leading in nominations for the upcoming Helen Hayes Awards in Washington, D.C. in May 2017.

From stage to screen, our province is making its mark.

Co-created by Rob and Peter Blackie, and produced by Take the Shot Productions, and ASAP Entertainment in association with Discovery, *Frontier* chronicles the ruthless world of the fur trade in 18th century North America. Set against our rugged landscape, the majority of the series has been filmed right here, and is garnering considerable attention from viewers. 571,000 people tuned in to watch the series premiere on Discovery, making it the most-watched Canadian scripted series debut on entertainment specialty TV this year. Take the Shot Productions showcased the beauty of our capital city through *Republic of Doyle*. This time around, Take the Shot is showing the breathtaking natural heritage and beauty of our province to the world, with Discovery as its exclusive Canadian broadcaster, and Netflix its international broadcaster.

Our province has also become a world-class foodie destination. Voted Best New Restaurant in 2011, Raymond's; the restaurant created by Jeremy Charles and Jeremy Bonia, was just honoured as among the next generation of dining destinations in the world in the Diners Club 50 Best Discovery Series. The Merchant Tavern recently partnered with Ontario-based Order of Canada winning Chef Jamie Kennedy for a restaurant takeover. Adelaide Oyster House was named one of the Top 10 Best New Restaurants in 2015 by *enRoute magazine*. The Fogo Island Inn was recognized with the same award in 2013. Our local chefs have competed and won on the national stage. People are travelling near and far to enjoy the bounty of our land and a true land-to-table experience at the food festival, Roots, Rants and Roars in Elliston.

Indeed, we ought to celebrate the many successes of our province, while reflecting on its challenges. We have rich resources and creative and inventive people. Our Government will harness these resources and the ingenuity of our people to build a stronger economic foundation.

Our Government inherited a deep-rooted reliance on oil, and with it, a culture of overspending. Our fiscal problem was not caused by a drop in oil prices, but rather this decline in oil prices exposed the culture of overspending.

We inherited an economy lacking diversity and we inherited responsibility for a massive structural deficit, the true size of which had been hidden from the people.

Our Government inherited Muskrat Falls, a legacy project for some, a tremendous financial burden for all of us. When we formed government, almost \$4.5 billion had been spent and a total of \$6.6 billion in contracts had been signed. If we cancelled the project, we would still owe billions of dollars. If we cancelled the project, we would have to somehow provide the power promised to Nova Scotia, or financial compensation in lieu. We are in too deep. Cancelling the project is not feasible and it would put more financial burden on the people of this province.

We have committed to doing our best to mitigate the impacts of the project on residents, and as

such, appointed a world-class leader in the energy sector, Stan Marshall, as CEO of Nalcor Energy. In order to mitigate the potential efforts of soaring energy bills when Muskrat Falls comes online, we have instructed Nalcor to pursue all options for rate mitigation. Through the Independent Appointments Commission, a new, stronger Nalcor Board of Directors, led by Chair Brendan Paddock, was appointed to work with Mr. Marshall to get this project on track.

Also, in November 2016 our Government was pleased to announce we secured \$2.9 billion in additional loan guarantee support for the Muskrat Falls project. Through our efforts with the Federal Government, we were able to receive positive benefits for adjustments to escrow account obligations. These actions have improved our financial position and will provide much needed support to the ratepayers of the province. Our Government has followed through on discussions with the Government of Canada on the specific terms and conditions of the support and we hope to announce the detailed agreement in the near future.

We also forged a historic partnership with Indigenous governments and organizations, ensuring appropriate environmental and human safeguards are in place. Our actions will be guided by evidence-based decision making, and we will work with stakeholders to make this project work for all our benefit.

As a province, we have had to come to terms with the unprecedented fiscal situation before us, and it has not been easy. We faced the very real risk of losing the ability to borrow to pay for programs and services government provides. Innovative measures were required to make up for falling oil prices while we get government spending under control and diversify beyond oil. For over a decade, the province was operating without a plan for a sustainable future. That had to change.

Through extensive consultation with the public and leaders from the business community, labour and arts, we drafted *The Way Forward: A vision for sustainability and growth in Newfoundland and Labrador*.

The vision of *The Way Forward* is this: Together we will achieve a strong, diversified

province with a high standard of living. The determination and drive of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will be supported by responsive, innovative and efficient programs and services.

Our government's vision is centered on three guiding principles: "we will do better with less," "we will collaborate," and "we will challenge ourselves."

We will do better with less.

There is a great opportunity to do better with less. While Newfoundland and Labrador's program costs are the highest per capita among provinces, many of our outcomes, including health outcomes, rank among the lowest. Put simply, we are not seeing a sufficient return on investment. Further, poor outcomes drive spending higher. It is incumbent upon us as a government to ensure a healthy return on investment of taxpayers' dollars.

As such, Our Government introduced a new *Public Procurement Act*, which will govern the acquisition of goods, services, public works and leasing of space by all public bodies, including municipalities, health boards, school boards, academic institutions, Crown corporations and government. We are focused on the concept of best value and enhancing oversight, transparency, accountability, consistency and fairness. The new procurement framework will include the Act, as well as regulations, policies and procedures that are actively under development. Thresholds governing buying activity are to be increased through regulation, which will enhance the opportunity for local suppliers while maintaining consistency with our trade agreements.

For the first time in our history, the provincial government is employing a zero-based budgeting approach. No longer can departments assume their base budget will be automatically approved; under zero-based budgeting, departments have had to build their budgets up from scratch – justifying any continued investment in all areas of operations. Government agencies, boards and commissions have also been required to follow the zero-based approach for discretionary spending areas.

We have reorganized departments based on identified synergies to reduce silos, streamline operations and reduce costs. We are also implementing a flatter, leaner management structure to address what is the largest provincial public sector per capita among provinces. Our Government will also work with agencies, boards and commissions to implement a flatter, leaner management structure.

We will collaborate.

We are stronger together. This past year has been a challenging one as we are finally facing the dire consequences of years of spending without a sustainable plan for the future.

It is time for us to come together, to work together on addressing a deficit and a debt that will overwhelm our children and grandchildren in the absence of action. We formed government at a fiscal breaking point. We are determined to embrace what some may deem a crisis as an opportunity to do better with less. We are working with our partners at all levels of government to achieve better outcomes. We continue to engage stakeholders so their perspectives inform and enrich our overall approach. We will work together to improve our province's economic foundation. Last year, we hosted the first annual Premier's Forum on Local Government. We have also committed to establish a Leaders Roundtable with Indigenous Governments and Organizations, who will meet for the first time this spring. Together we will shape an agenda, and develop even stronger relationships as we build for our future.

We will challenge ourselves.

The roadmap of *The Way Forward* spans three phases of action comprising tangible initiatives.

These first six months have focused on Securing our Footing – rapidly implementing initiatives to reduce spending and support economic growth. Yesterday, we released our report card on progress. We are well on our way to addressing the challenges facing our province.

We are now entering the second phase of *The Way Forward, Realizing our Potential*, which spans the next 18 months and focuses on actions to reverse negative socio-economic indicators

that prevent economic growth and drive up public expenditures. This update to our vision outlines the work we will prioritize in 2017-18. Yesterday, the Premier released this plan.

The third phase, *Building for our Future*, looks beyond 18 months and focuses on creating long-term conditions for growth in the province by investing in the future, including redesigning government services to fit demographics of the future and investing in children and youth.

As we achieve the goals outlined in our plan, Our Government will challenge ourselves to achieve even more. At the beginning of each fiscal year, we will release the next phase of tangible actions to ensure our vision becomes reality. And as we did yesterday for Phase One, we will issue a report card on our progress at the end of each additional phase. Through concrete actions, timelines and reporting, we will challenge ourselves to remain ambitious, responsive and accountable.

The Way Forward: Realizing Our Potential, which outlines our province's priorities for 2017-18, is an economic development plan for the province. The actions we have committed to undertake this coming fiscal year focus on constructing a stronger economic foundation for our province.

A Stronger Economic Foundation

Establishing a stronger economic foundation means improving the conditions necessary for private sector job growth and economic growth. We will adopt a whole-of-government approach to creating the conditions necessary for new private sector job creation and economic growth. Building a sustainable economy is our top priority.

The Way Forward: Realizing Our Potential has outlined a new approach to economic development and private sector job growth.

Jobs will be our top priority.

Our Government is immediately mandating a new Cabinet Committee on jobs to foster stronger employment conditions and opportunities. This Committee of Ministers will serve as a forum to identify new whole-of-

government opportunities for private sector job growth.

The Cabinet Committee on Jobs will seek the advice of provincial leaders, including private sector labour representatives and members of the province's business community.

As part of this approach, each minister and government department will be expected to report on how their actions create stronger conditions for economic and private sector job growth in Newfoundland and Labrador. This will encourage decision making that places our economic future at the center of all decisions.

We have set targets for sector growth.

Last fall, we outlined a number of targets for our economy related to agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, tourism and immigration. These targets show Newfoundlanders and Labradorians where our economy is headed. This provides certainty and shows clearly how we plan to diversify our economy.

Our Government is focused on supporting well-established industries like the fishery, oil and gas and mining, while growing industries with tremendous potential, such as aquaculture, agriculture and technology. Beyond our resources and diverse wealth in non-renewable resources, our greatest resource is our people, and their resilience and ingenuity in the face of adversity. *The Way Forward* outlines a tangible plan for diversification.

A return to groundfish is a centrepiece of our economic development approach.

The Way Forward includes a commitment to support a successful transition to greater activity in the groundfish sector. Work in this area includes establishing a Fisheries Advisory Council to help Our Government work with industry stakeholders to achieve a successful transition. We will develop an action plan for cod revitalization, which will support all stages of the value chain – harvesting, processing and marketing – to maximize the value of available resources to the province.

We are also funding new technology, research, and marketing activity by industry players

through the Seafood Innovation and Transition Program. The program funds projects that focus on innovations in harvesting, processing, aquaculture and marketing which will strategically place Newfoundland and Labrador in a position to avail of opportunities in the international marketplace.

Soon, we will build upon this work on a scale the provincial seafood industry has never seen before. Working with our federal partners, we have secured a commitment of \$100 million in federal funding through the new Atlantic Fisheries Fund. This funding will be leveraged by Our Government and industry to support innovation, new infrastructure, a successful transition into greater groundfish activity, and increased aquaculture.

Our Government will work closely with industry over this year to ensure the unprecedented funding we gained for our province will position our harvesters, processors, and aquaculture operators for long-term success in markets around the world. We will protect jobs and grow new economic opportunity within our iconic seafood sector by helping industry players pursue best practice across their operations. That means we will not only support innovation, but also science, sustainability and safety.

In keeping with that goal, we will be working with our federal partners to leverage the \$1.5 billion allocated to the Ocean Protection Plan to protect our waters, the resources within them, and the people who rely on them. Specifically, this funding will play a key role in studying and managing fish stocks at a time when our provincial fishery resources are changing, and support innovation in aquaculture. As well, under the Ocean Protection Plan, new Canadian Coast Guard lifeboat stations will be constructed in our province and the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre in St. John's will be reopened.

We will seize opportunities in aquaculture.

Our Government made aquaculture a focus of our research and development support program because we see great potential in the industry. We are working to see the industry grow from the 22,815 metric tons of salmon it produced in 2015 to 50,000 metric tons annually. The mussel industry is estimated to have the capacity to

grow to 10,750 metric tons of production annually. These are the targets we have set and our Government will take measures to remove stale applications from the licensing system to free up water area for aquaculture development. In addition, Our Government will establish rigorous criteria that companies must meet in order to maintain site applications and licences in the Newfoundland and Labrador aquaculture licensing system (i.e., use it or lose it).

We will position Newfoundland and Labrador as the preferred destination for oil and gas development.

The oil and gas industry has generated considerable wealth, opportunity and expertise here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and holds much promise for our future. Considerable research has been undertaken through our public institutions into exploration and development in Arctic and harsh environments. We know our industry and the research that drives it is world class. *The Way Forward* commits to positioning the province as a preferred global location for oil and gas development. And we are on our way.

As part of capitalizing on the potential of new developments, we made it a focus under our vision to: decrease the time between identifying prospects and production; ensure that our regulatory environment is consistent with recognized global standards; and promote innovation.

In December, our Government announced an Oil and Gas Industry Development Council. Chaired by the Minister of Natural Resources, the council's membership was selected via the merit-based appointments process and comprises the breadth of experience and skill sets needed to determine a long-term vision for the industry. Our Government is also assigning officials to be facilitators for early-stage proponents within not only the oil and gas sector, but in mining and renewable energy as well.

The Labrador offshore will also attract new interest and investment in the coming years as the next licensing round for exploration rights is scheduled to take place in the Labrador South Region. We are confident this activity will build on the region's reputation as a natural resource

powerhouse, and generate even more economic activity and employment.

Our Government is very engaged in significant, modern seismic acquisition activity to reveal more of the province's oil and gas prospects.

As a result, we now have an inventory of high-quality data on our offshore prospects, which forms the basis of the recent publically released resource estimates, which is attracting global attention.

Through new seismic work, we have delineated significant new basin areas, and over 350 leads and prospects to add to our 20 basins, all of which are of great interest to global players.

Last November, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board announced a successful call for bids in our province's offshore, with a total work commitment of close to \$758 million. This call was one of the most successful in the world in 2016. In just over one year, we have welcomed seven new entrants to the province's offshore oil and gas industry. We aspire for our province to be the energy capital of the Atlantic and recognized globally as an important energy hub.

Our Government also recently celebrated the one billionth barrel of oil – that's the one billionth barrel of oil – produced from the Hibernia platform, and with advances in technology and continued exploration work in the slope and deep waters of our offshore including the Flemish Pass, Orphan Basin, and Hopedale and Holton basins, there are significant, exciting opportunities for the oil and gas industry here at home.

We will promote opportunities in the mining sector.

Mining has been a key economic driver throughout our province for decades, and like our fishery, has driven settlement to particular areas of the province, and has helped shape our identity.

Despite lower commodity prices, mineral shipments are forecast to be \$2.9 billion in 2017. At Voisey's Bay, the underground mine expansion project has started. Tata Steel

Minerals Canada restarted production in spring of 2016 after a winter shutdown. IOC has sanctioned its Wabush 3 project. Rambler Metals and Mining announced financing to support their mining of the Lower Footwall Zone, extending the life of the Baie Verte area mine to 21 years. Anaconda Mining has begun exporting waste rock from its Pine Cove gold mine and continues to explore its Viking project in hopes of mining following the exhaustion of the Pine Cove mine. Canada Fluorspar has begun constructing the mine in St. Lawrence and there are many advanced exploration projects for potential investment for gold, base metals, rare earths, and other commodities.

Throughout the province, new activity in mining is happening. Approximately 21,000 claims were staked in 2016 –almost four times the amount staked in 2015, and the most staked in the last five years. Our Government is taking advantage of this upswing by increasing efforts to support growth in the industry.

Our vision includes a commitment to increase mining activity through targeted promotional efforts, as well as through innovations like core digitization. Just as seismic data is shared with oil and gas companies to spur interest in petroleum exploration and development, core digitization makes core sample imagery readily available in electronic format to companies worldwide to complement the data currently available. Our Government is also encouraging further exploration through a variety of other initiatives, including public geoscience, efficient and transparent regulation, the core storage program, prospector training and mentoring, and the mineral incentive program.

We are confident our additional efforts to promote the industry and share information will build on the recent growth in exploration activity. By creating an attractive environment for exploration, we will strengthen the industry, and grow private sector jobs and the economy throughout our province.

We will provide a new focus on agriculture to promote food security and explore untapped economic potential.

Our Government is also aggressively pursuing new agricultural development by making more

Crown lands available for agriculture purposes, which will contribute to increased agricultural food production and improve food security in Newfoundland and Labrador. Farmers and agricultural producers will now have almost double the amount of land available to them with additional Crown lands now available for agricultural production.

Our Government is creating new ways for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to become farmers. We will transform the Wooddale Tree Nursery to a Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Development. The facility will not only produce tree seedlings for silviculture, but will also undertake fruit and vegetable crop propagation and research activities that advance and diversify the agriculture sector.

Our Government will also complete a pilot project to undertake large-scale land development on priority areas of interest, with the objective of offering agriculture leases that are more advanced in their productive capacity and readiness. This will enable new entrants to the agricultural sector to become profitable earlier.

These actions will not only foster economic development and create jobs; they will also help improve health outcomes. Doubling the amount of Crown land available for agriculture will also help deliver on *The Way Forward* commitment to double our food security to at least 20 per cent by 2022. Our efforts in supporting the fishery, aquaculture, and agriculture sectors will be key in achieving this goal.

Our Government is increasing awareness of opportunities in agriculture by providing support to Agriculture in the Classroom to develop an agri-career initiative for junior and high school students. We also helped fund the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture's Young Farmer's Leadership Summit. We are confident that these kinds of investments will encourage and support new farmers, expand existing farmland, and promote commercialization and growth in the Newfoundland and Labrador agriculture and agrifoods industry.

Research and development will also play a vital role in supporting the development of the

provincial agriculture industry. In 2016, the Agrifoods Development Branch conducted its first canola research trial. In May, 30 acres were planted in Pasadena which proved to be a success with yield beyond our expectations. Canola meal is currently being fed as an ingredient in livestock rations and the oil is being assessed for quality and suitability for human consumption. In 2017, canola research will be expanded with additional producer participation.

Our world-class tourism experience and rich culture will greet you at the door.

Newfoundland and Labrador is increasingly becoming a destination of choice for tourists, and it is no wonder given the rugged beauty of our landscape and the distinct culture of the people who live here.

We have a superior tourism product, and our awareness as a tourism destination is growing. Newfoundland and Labrador now welcomes a half million visitors annually, our tourism industry generates approximately \$1 billion in spending per year, and it also employs more than 18,000 people. Just last year, our stunning 'Find Yourself' Campaign was awarded Best in Show by Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International.

We are proud of what the industry has already achieved, and our focus now is to build on that strength. Our vision includes a commitment to achieve \$1.6 billion annually in resident and non-resident visitor spending by 2020, which will double the 2009 levels.

A sense of arrival is the welcome and warmth that visitors feel once they have reached their destination. Ideally, this sense of arrival is in keeping with the perceptions generated through the promotional activities and in meeting expectations of the vacation experience in the mind of the visitor prior to the trip. Having advanced a new tourism plan, this is the next aspect of our tourism sector that Our Government will focus on. We will collaborate with tourism operators, municipalities and transportation organizations at major entry points, gateways, hubs and attractions to establish common sense of arrival goals and priorities and initiate partnership activities.

We recognize our growing tourism industry is due not only to the diverse beauty of our province, but to the creativity of our people. From *Frontier to Come From Away*, our artists are proving themselves as key economic drivers for our province. The calibre of their work can be seen in the multitude of award winning and attention grabbing television and film productions taking place here, or the globally renowned musicals featuring stories and performers that originate from our great province. We see it in the award winning music from bands and performers who hail from every part of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we see it in the visual arts, crafts and dance productions on display here and around the world. We are committed to supporting such great work, which not only attracts people to our province and enriches our daily lives, but also preserves the sense of place and history that is the center of who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

To enhance recognition and support of artists in our province, *The Way Forward* includes a commitment to introduce Status of the Artist legislation. The legislation and other policy measures will be based on feedback from an Arts Advisory Committee and will be part of a broader work we will do to develop a new cultural plan for the province. Consultations on this plan have occurred, including an online survey that was completed by 256 artists across the province.

And I'm now halfway through.

We will adopt a new approach to innovation and will support social enterprises.

As we work to grow the provincial economy, Our Government will support new innovation initiatives. We are working on a Business Innovation Agenda for Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as federal-provincial innovation initiatives from the Atlantic Growth Strategy and other federal Research and Development funding opportunities specific to clean technology.

Through the province's long-standing collaboration with the Maritimes, Our Government is focused on harmonizing the regulatory burden on Newfoundland and

Labrador companies that do business elsewhere in the region to avoid unnecessary impediments to growth, helping them succeed and expand across Atlantic Canada.

By collaborating with Maritime provinces and the federal government through the Atlantic Growth Strategy, Our Government is extending further still the effort to drive growth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have contributed to the modernization of government procurement in the province by bringing together the purchasing power of Our Government with that of the Government of Canada, and other public institutions to achieve savings and make it easier for Newfoundland and Labrador companies to sell their products to more public organizations.

Through the Atlantic Growth Strategy, Our Government is also supporting innovative Newfoundland and Labrador firms with high growth potential in an effort to create more well-paying and skilled jobs right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are working to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are getting maximum benefit from the federal government investments in infrastructure in the province, including investments in clean growth; and we continue to work together to drive growth in priority areas such as health innovation, which will enhance the sustainability of health care in our province.

Our Government has committed up to \$4.5 million over seven years to support Memorial University's involvement in the Ocean Frontier Institute, a partnership between Dalhousie University, Memorial University and the University of Prince Edward Island. Our Government's overall investment played an instrumental role in leveraging investment through the Canada First Research Excellence Fund competition. This Institute will play a key role in developing the technical expertise required for world-class research and innovation.

To increase the number of social enterprises in Newfoundland and Labrador and enhance services for existing social enterprises, Our Government will develop a Social Enterprise

Action Plan. Social enterprise development is another innovation tool for advancing regional growth opportunities to benefit the economy, support rural sustainability and encourage entrepreneurial governance models and service delivery.

A strong labour market will underpin our stronger economy.

Businesses in our province often cite a shortage of skilled labour as one of their major impediments to success. Better aligning labour supply and demand is essential to our economic development plan.

Our Government is developing a comprehensive human resource plan, informed by forecasted labour market opportunities and enhanced labour market information products to assist in workforce planning for individuals and businesses. In developing this plan, we will seek input from sector associations and industry groups to better respond to their labour market needs and support industry diversification. This work will include working with priority sectors, including the agriculture, aquaculture and oil and gas industries.

The College of the North Atlantic is essential in developing an educated labour market for our province. To strengthen the role of College of the North Atlantic, Our Government is working with them to review their operations and activities. This ambitious review involves implementing forward-thinking strategic initiatives to modernize all aspects of the college and maximize its potential as a provincial leader in labour market relevant training, lifelong learning, entrepreneurship, innovation, research and development, community access and capacity building. Our Government will enhance and revitalize the College's ability to have its campuses serve as local and regional economic generators and community hubs. A report will be issued in the coming weeks, providing details on College of the North Atlantic's vision moving forward.

Our Government is also enhancing collaboration between Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic to increase the amount of research and program initiatives undertaken at both institutions. As such, Our Government has

formed a council that is comprised of representatives from Government, Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic, including students, to deliver a report on recommendations for more opportunities for post-secondary collaboration. The council will also explore further options for articulation agreements between both institutions. The council had its first meeting on March 23, and we look forward to receiving their recommendations.

Our province leads the country in offering the most generous student financial assistance program available anywhere in Canada. Memorial University tuition is the lowest in Canada and students pay only a fraction of how much it costs for their education. In 2016-17, we committed \$62.9 million to Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic to enable a continuation of the tuition freeze. In 2017-18, Our Government will continue to ensure supports are in place so our students can avail of a high-quality, affordable education.

Both culturally and economically, there is strength in diversity.

John Cabot's reports of waters teeming with fish brought people from Ireland and England to settle here and our identity as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians continues to evolve. Our Government is committed to opening our doors to people from other countries.

Immigration is a focus of *The Way Forward* given its tremendous potential for economic and labour market growth in Newfoundland and Labrador. Moreover, immigration contributes to our social and cultural vibrancy. Our Government will support immigration to the province by focusing on increased recruitment and retention of newcomers. As committed in our Vision, Our Government has recently released *The Way Forward on Immigration*. It outlines concrete actions we will take in collaboration with our partners to welcome 17,000 immigrants annually by 2022, an increase of 50 per cent over 2015. We will do more to welcome newcomers and immigrant entrepreneurs to our province. Our Government's approach would include working with the Government of Canada to explore the creation of new pathways for international

students to establish businesses in our province, creating their own employment opportunities and opportunities for others at the same time.

Better Services

As part of *The Way Forward*, we are delivering better services to residents. Service improvement must underpin all our decisions.

From this commitment, Our Government will improve the integration of business financing programs, which are currently provided by multiple departments and agencies. We will complete an analysis of existing non-commercial economic development funding to improve government-wide collaboration and maximize resources. Our Government will also publish service standards for major programs, including average timelines for decisions, to provide more transparency and clarity for the public on how decisions are made. We have recently released timelines for our major business programs, and we will release timelines for other programs in the future.

Our Government has adopted multi-year planning and early tendering of road work, and a full list of roads projects for 2017 was released earlier this year. This initiative will enhance planning and decision making for road projects, will contribute to cost savings, and more effective use of taxpayers' dollars while improving information sharing, transparency and accountability to the public and other stakeholders.

Building on that initiative, Our Government released its multi-year infrastructure plan prior to the budget. This key vision initiative prioritizes infrastructure projects, will be updated as new priorities are identified, and provides the public and the construction industry with an outline of commitments to education, health, buildings and roads infrastructure over the next five years.

In addition, a five-year plan for marine-related infrastructure was released yesterday. The plan includes upgrades to terminal facilities, access roads, wharves and washroom facilities, with a goal of improving services at ferry terminals for the travelling public.

While these initiatives will improve the overall approach to developing transportation infrastructure in our province, we realize community infrastructure is also vital, and have taken steps to help communities in this regard. We appreciate the challenges that municipalities face providing services and maintaining infrastructure. Local service districts and unincorporated areas also face high expectations from residents, but have even fewer resources. There are many cases in our province where communities exist close to each other, and in those cases, sharing infrastructure and service costs is a viable option to bearing them separately.

As per Our Government's commitment in *The Way Forward*, we have introduced new infrastructure program guidelines and criteria that strategically enable communities to pursue regional infrastructure improvements and allow for the expansion of shared services.

By supporting collaboration among communities, we expect to reduce costs for both the provincial government, and municipal taxpayers.

Making transportation and community infrastructure development a focus of our activities positions Our Government to strengthen communities, and support a higher quality of life for residents. Having the right infrastructure in place will allow Our Government to pursue better outcomes for residents in key areas such as health and education, and advance important province-wide initiatives that promote wellness in our society, including combating climate change and improving inclusion and accessibility. Our Government is committed to delivering on both, while maintaining a higher level of efficiency that will allow us to achieve fiscal balance.

Labrador is a distinct and integral part of the province's culture, history and identity. Our Government will continue, through the Office of Labrador Affairs, to coordinate and implement a focused and innovative approach to improve service delivery as well as continue to prioritize strategic infrastructure needs in the region.

Better Outcomes

Our Government is committed to improving the health, education and social outcomes of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Even though our province spends more per person on health care than any other province, our residents still have some of the poorest health outcomes in Canada. But we know that in order to change this we must do more than simply invest more money into our hospitals and health care services.

Evidence from across Canada and around the world shows us that our health is primarily determined by factors like income, education and the way we build our homes and communities. Better medical services are critical to treating our illnesses but will not make us a healthier population. If we truly want to make a difference in the health of our population we know that we must invest in and focus on the root causes of health.

As such, Our Government will build health impact considerations into all policy decisions, from infrastructure planning to labour market supports. This Health-in-All Policies approach will enable Our Government to make all decisions in a manner that strengthens focus on measurable improvements in our health status. It will help prevent illness and create the environments needed to support and promote healthy people, with better quality of life and capacity for learning; stronger families and sustainable communities; and a healthier, more productive and socially inclusive economy.

Our Government is committed to improving the health and well-being of the people of this province. We have established targets through our Way Forward initiative to increase breastfeeding rates, reduce obesity and smoking rates, and increase physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption. All of these are designed to achieve significant progress by 2025.

Supporting a Healthier Province

To do this, we will implement healthy living initiatives to achieve a healthier tomorrow. A healthier province will result in lower health costs per capita, which will enable our health

system to be more sustainable. We will work with schools and communities to develop healthy environments, and will encourage Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to live healthier, more active lives through initiatives such as the Carrot Rewards app.

On December 23, Our Government reached an agreement with the federal government on health funding. This agreement includes targeted funding of \$160.7 million over 10 years for home and palliative care and mental health. A further example of Our Government's productive working relationship with our federal colleagues, this agreement provides stability to health funding, as well as focusing on targeted areas that are of key interest to our province.

Our Government also recognizes the need to better address mental health and addictions concerns in our province. We have made great strides in the past year with a community treatment order quality assurance review, the *Secure Withdrawal Management Act*, and with the Department of Health and Community Services partnering to pilot a new social and emotional learning curriculum for primary and elementary grades. The All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions has completed its work, and with its report recently tabled. Our Government will develop an Implementation Plan that responds to the recommendations of the All-Party Committee.

The abuse of prescription medications has become an increasingly serious issue at both the national and provincial level in recent years, with the inappropriate prescribing of medications with high abuse potential, and patient practices such as double doctoring of such medications identified as particular issues. Our Government will build on the work done in 2016, including the introduction of Suboxone as an alternate to methadone and the funding of 1,200 Naloxone kits to treat opioid overdoses. The core initiative of the provincial Prescription Monitoring Program will be the full implementation of the Primary Network by the end of March. Our Government will supplement full implementation of the Pharmacy Network with legislative and policy changes to: allow physicians to view a patient's drug history before writing a prescription; allow checks to be made for potential inappropriate prescribing or

double doctoring when a prescription is filled; and permit the analysis of prescription databases to detect possible areas of abuse or trends in inappropriate prescribing.

Through the Departments of Justice and Public Safety and Health and Community Services, Our Government is conducting a feasibility study for a drug treatment court in our province as part of *The Way Forward*. Drug treatment courts provide specialized court-monitored treatment and community service support for offenders with drug addictions, combining judicial supervision with substance abuse treatment with the goal of addressing the linkage between drugs and crime. The Court will be targeted towards offenders with drug dependencies, in particular those with serious addictions to illicit use of methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin or other opiates, and is intended to address the criminal behaviour of individuals who have engaged in non-violent offences that were motivated by their addictions.

While addressing drug addiction is a foremost priority, so is addressing the medical needs of our aging population. It is a known fact that by 2025, one in four Newfoundlanders will be seniors. Our Government is committed to a strong health and community care system that meets the needs of our aging population. Care should be provided in the home where possible, in the community including long-term care facilities where available, and in hospitals when there is an acute health care issue. Our Government is working to provide more and better care in the home through the Home First Program philosophy and systematically working to increase long-term care beds throughout the province to provide the most appropriate care for our seniors.

Our Government recently introduced a new care option, enhanced care in personal care homes, which allows for the placement of individuals with enhanced care needs. We have also expanded access to the Paid Family Caregiver Option through the Home Support Program. Alongside improving our Home Support Program, these initiatives support individuals to live in their communities thereby reducing admissions to long-term care or acute care.

In January, Our Government announced that it is proceeding with the development of a new long-term care home in Corner Brook. Planning is currently underway to address the long-term care needs of people in the Central Region. Creating more space in long-term care will ease pressure on the health care system, moving people far more quickly from acute care beds to more appropriate care in the community.

Earlier this year, Our Government also announced its commitment to proceed with the development of a new regional hospital in Corner Brook. Construction of the facility is expected to begin in 2019 with completion anticipated in 2023.

It is important for Our Government to explore innovative ways to advance needed infrastructure and deliver services in a cost-effective manner. In announcing construction of both the hospital and the long-term care facility, Our Government has signalled its intention to partner with the private sector. Both facilities will be designed, built, financed and maintained by the private sector but, in keeping with a previous commitment, resident and patient care will be continued to be administered and provided by public sector employees, as is currently the case. By partnering with private industry, we can help ensure that the new facilities are designed, built, financed and maintained in a way that provides greater value for money for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Both the hospital and the new long-term care facility are examples of how we are finding more innovative and effective ways to deliver services.

In line with the commitments made in *The Way Forward*, Our Government is committed to expanding the number of interdisciplinary primary health care teams. New interdisciplinary teams, available in local communities such as Bonavista, are helping individuals and families to maintain and improve their health. These teams are better positioned to meet the changing health care needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, particularly as we continue to age and with the management of chronic diseases like diabetes.

Our Government is supporting front-line providers, such as nurse practitioners where

Newfoundland and Labrador is a leader in Canada, to ensure they are able to work at full scope of practice and fully utilize their expertise to improve health outcomes. We are also investing in new electronic record keeping systems and a provincial electronic medical record that will help to connect health care providers and ensure secure patient information is available to these teams and health professionals across the health care system.

Through overall better management of our health care resources and targeted investments to support critical care areas, Our Government will achieve better health outcomes, better care and better value in our health care system to benefit all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Supporting Education

Following a successful year that saw the implementation of full-day kindergarten province-wide, we will continue to invest in the improvement of educational facilities. This includes funding repairs and maintenance of K-12 school facilities to ensure that students and teachers have the best possible learning environments. We will also see ongoing major capital projects, including new schools and extensions, needed to address student capacity.

Our Government will also work with the Conseil Scolaire Francophone de Terre-Neuve et Labrador to address francophone junior and senior high school programming issues in the greater St. John's area.

As outlined in *The Way Forward*, Our Government will continue work with the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes in the coming year. Recommendations are anticipated this spring, which will guide changes to the education system starting in the 2018 school year.

We will provide increased educational support to disengaged and at-risk students and youth by expanding options for acquiring high school equivalency testing and supporting and increasing opportunities for career education and accessibility for distance education supports.

Indicative of Our Government's commitment to early learning and child care, we will increase

child care subsidies available to low-income families throughout the province by increasing the income threshold eligibility requirement.

Our Government will also look to increase the Early Learning and Child Care Supplement for qualifying early childhood educators.

Supporting Our Communities

Public safety is a top priority for Our Government. Recently, the House of Assembly passed amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* to strengthen impaired driving laws. These changes include the introduction of a mandatory ignition interlock program; mandatory roadside impoundment; and requiring drivers under 22 years of age to maintain zero per cent blood alcohol content. The amendments were developed through extensive consultation with Mothers Against Drunk Driving and with the support of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We believe these improvements to the *Highway Traffic Act* will help reduce impaired driving and make our roads, highways and communities safer. Our Government will continue to identify opportunities to improve highway safety, with input from community stakeholders and law enforcement.

This past December, Our Government announced amendments to the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act* to include presumptive cancer coverage for career and volunteer firefighters. As a result of these changes, firefighters who serve for a specified period of time and develop a specific form of cancer will be presumed to have developed that cancer as a result of their work. Qualifying firefighters will receive wage-loss benefits, medical aids and certain other benefits through WorkplaceNL, while health care costs associated with their cancer treatment will be paid through the Medical Care Plan. Our Government made a commitment to firefighters in the province, and we have followed through.

In September 2016, Our Government established a commission of inquiry into the death of Mr. Donald Dunphy, naming the Honourable Justice Leo Barry of the Court of Appeal as Commissioner. The inquiry has been examining the facts and circumstances of Mr. Dunphy's

death and will provide its report to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety before July 1, 2017. The Department of Justice and Public Safety will respond to and address the recommendations of the inquiry upon their receipt.

This year, Our Government will introduce a bill to create a Serious Incident Response Team. This team will investigate all matters that involve death, serious injury, sexual assault and domestic violence or other matters of significant public interest that may have arisen from the actions of any police officer in the province. This is a vital step towards ensuring public confidence in policing and the need for independence in all aspects of the investigative process. It reflects Our Government's commitment to upholding the administration of justice and to making our communities and regions safer.

Supporting our Environment

Climate change is one of the most challenging long-term issues facing the world today. All jurisdictions must be part of the solution and Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to do its part. To this end, Our Government, in partnership with our provincial and federal colleagues, adopted a pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change in December 2016. This framework seeks to advance collective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, grow the clean economy and create jobs, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The framework also gives provinces flexibility to develop their own approaches and Newfoundland and Labrador will tailor its approach to fit our unique circumstances and balance economic and environmental interests. Our Government has committed to develop a Climate Change Action Plan that sets out next steps. We completed public consultations in the fall and will use this input to inform future direction.

Supporting Community Organizations

As Our Government focuses on better outcomes, we will continue to work towards the implementation of a strategic one-window, multi-year approach to community grant funding. This will ensure an efficient and

consistent approach to administration, accountability and evaluation. Issues related to equity, value-for-money, overlaps/duplication and service gaps will be addressed and application processes, assessment tools, and outcome tracking will be standardized. Legislative frameworks have been modified and financial systems will be modified as required to support the implementation of multi-year funding arrangements for community-based organizations through one access point. The overall outcome will be supporting community-based organizations by enabling them to plan more efficiently.

Supporting Indigenous People

Our Government is proud of our strong working relationship with Indigenous governments and organizations. We have worked with them to establish the Independent Experts Advisory Committee on the Lower Churchill and have made this relationship a top priority.

Last November, Our Government issued an Order-in-Council, establishing the Commission of Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in this province under the *Public Inquiries Act, 2006*. Through this action, Our Government's commitment to participate and support the national inquiry has been confirmed. We have engaged Indigenous governments and organizations in our province on this issue and look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the National Inquiry incorporates the perspectives and concerns of all Indigenous people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Supporting Women

Our Government will strengthen the capacity of departments and agencies to understand and apply gender inclusive analysis to policies, programs, services, legislation and budgets in order to ensure equitable outcomes for women.

In order to improve the social and economic status of women, we will lead the development of a women's leadership strategy and work with women's organizations to overcome barriers to women's participation in leadership positions.

We will work in collaboration with departments and agencies, community organizations, post-secondary institutions, employers' groups, unions and the private sector to prevent violence against women and other at-risk populations.

We will also continue to collaborate with Indigenous governments and organizations to prevent violence and advance the social and economic status of Indigenous women.

Our Government will also establish a Sexual Assault Response pilot program. This pilot program will provide victims of sexual assault with free and independent legal advice. It is intended to improve access to justice for victims, allowing better preparation for victims and creating a greater understanding of court processes. It will offer early legal intervention to victims to assist them with decisions around how they may wish to proceed given their own circumstances.

Supporting Seniors

Our Government recognizes the challenges and opportunities resulting from our aging population must be considered as we evolve our policies, programs and services. Recently, legislation was passed to establish the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. The Seniors' Advocate will report to the House of Assembly, focus on systemic issues affecting seniors and make recommendations to government accordingly. Regulations will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders over the next several months. The Independent Appointments Commission will actively recruit for the Seniors' Advocate position this year.

We must always, as a society, ensure that those that need help the most receive it, and we have an obligation to protect our low-income seniors. Our Government will continue its investment in the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit that is paid directly to eligible low-income seniors in quarterly installments.

Supporting Children

The protection and care of children and youth is a core value of Our Government and we are committed to working closely with all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to ensure

our children and youth benefit from the sense of well-being they deserve. Last year, Our Government embarked on a statutory review of the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* and a review of the Youth Services Program with the goal to further strengthen services to children, youth and their families. During this review, we met with numerous stakeholders and were pleased with the strength of the responses we received. The shared commitment to the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and youth is evident. We are committed to building on what we heard to make improvements to this legislation and we will also identify strategies to address the issue of continued program growth in children's protection and in care services. This analysis will be informed by a jurisdictional and literature review of promising and best practices in child welfare that address factors that impact program growth.

Our Government will continue to work cooperatively with the Child and Youth Advocate to develop legislation on mandatory reporting of critical incidents and deaths to the Advocate for consideration in the House of Assembly.

Supporting Inclusion

Our Government continues to work with the community of persons with disabilities and all residents to move forward on our commitment to become an inclusive province by removing barriers and ensuring residents have equitable access to opportunities and services. We will lead by example as we introduce new policies and guidelines that will make government communications more accessible and engagements more inclusive.

Supporting Affordable Housing

Our Government understands that safe, stable and affordable housing is fundamental to the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and our communities. We are committed to the development of a comprehensive provincial housing plan that addresses the diverse needs of our residents, paying particular attention to the housing needs and supports for the most vulnerable and those with distinct needs.

Our Government is currently working with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues to finalize the development of a National Housing Strategy. This strategy will include a common vision and priority areas to achieve better housing outcomes for all Canadians and will complement and support our provincial housing plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Our Government has begun the difficult work of getting our province back on track. We have laid forth our plan to achieve a strong, diversified province with a high standard of living.

As we continue our work, we are reminded that we are stronger together. We look back so we can look forward. We celebrate our country's history and diversity. We celebrate the people who were here first, and the people who came after, choosing to settle in our wonderful province.

We reflect on Beaumont-Hamel, on Monchy-le-Preux, on Vimy as moments when Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rose to the occasion, setting aside their fears in the face of great uncertainty. Our ancestors fought alongside their allies. We are proud of our history, and motivated for our great future.

Estimates of expenditure will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence this new Session.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.

Thank you very much.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(His Honour the Lieutenant Governor leaves the Assembly Chamber.)

(Mr. Speaker returns to the Chair.)

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Please be seated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Office Of The Auditor General And The Auditing Of The Public Accounts Of The Province. (Bill 1)

MR. SPEAKER: Is there leave for the hon. the Government House Leader to introduce the said bill?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave granted.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that Bill 1, An Act Respecting The Office Of The Auditor General And The Auditing Of The Public Accounts Of The Province, be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK (Murphy): A bill, An Act Respecting The Office Of The Auditor General And The Auditing Of The Public Accounts Of The Province. (Bill 1)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 1 has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 1 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to make a speech to Members in this General Assembly, and we shall take a few moments now to distribute that speech to Members.

(The Pages distribute the Speech to all Members.)

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my great pleasure to rise in this hon. House today to represent the kind-hearted people of the beautiful District of Stephenville – Port au Port. I want to begin by thanking the Lieutenant Governor for delivering of the Speech from the Throne this afternoon, the Hon. Frank Fagan and his wife, Patricia, so truly dedicated to their roles. Without hesitation, their Honours spend so much time around engaging communities across this great province.

I'd like to say how pleased I am to be here today on behalf of my party as well as my district. The Stephenville – Port au Port area is a place of scenic beauty and cultural diversity. We owe so much of our history to Mi'kmaq, French, Portuguese, Basque and American influences. Echoes of this rich past are still heard clearly today. They're heard in our songs, our family names. They are on our street signs and in the stories we share and pass on.

Mr. Speaker, the district I represent is some 770 kilometres west of the City of St. John's and though the challenges and characteristics of our rural communities are different from the capital's, our needs and uncertainties are the same as those held across the Island and in Labrador. Jobs, health care, good schools, better prospects, these are the foundations of our families and our communities. And for too many, that footing has never felt more unsteady. But I strongly believe that our government is delivering action to get Newfoundland and Labrador on firmer ground.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: I have learned in my short tenure here that to describe responsible governance as an application and compromise is an understatement. Each and every one of us in this hon. House is called upon daily to serve the interests of the many, without neglecting the often conflicting needs of the few. Decisive action is frequently needed but less often popular.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to draw attention to the title of this year's Throne Speech: *The Way Forward to Greater Prosperity*. In the fall of last year, our government presented *The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth*. As you know, this is our plan to address the province's economic, social and fiscal challenges.

In many ways, our government was left with critical issues that demanded immediate attention after years and years of neglect. *The Way Forward* not only sets out the policies, targets and goals our government is taking to correct the course of the province, but they also serve as a record of our commitments. The government you see here today is a very stark contrast to the previous administration that led this province for 12 years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: Instead of relying on a volatile commodity to carry our province, we have set plans and targets to both diversify and grow our economy.

As evident in our plan, we will no longer hang our hat on one industry. Our economy, like our people, must be innovative and diverse. But, Mr. Speaker, our people are also bold, and we cannot ask them to accept an inheritance that only burdens generations to follow.

To this end, our government has been very bold and open when addressing the fact that while we have the highest revenue per capita in the country, we also lead the country in spending. And from all the spending we saw from the former government, our outcomes have not improved. This uninformed spending inflated our public sector and sent our health and education indicators well below the national average.

Mr. Speaker, this province was never in more need of a strong plan than it was when we entered government, and as we saw in yesterday's report card on our last six months, Phase One of *The Way Forward*, we are delivering on our plan. By working together we are making real progress and moving our province in the right direction.

As reflected in our five-year infrastructure plan, we are supporting improvements in health care, education, roads and municipalities. These investments are making our communities more attractive places to live, and support economic development.

Examples of initiatives set out in the infrastructure plan include the Corner Brook long-term care facility and the replacement of Western Memorial Regional Hospital. Aside creating hundreds of jobs, these projects will address the critical needs of our province. One of those critical needs is an enhanced cancer care program which will include radiation services so that individuals who require this treatment will be able to receive it in a supportive environment near family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, we are also committed to food security and the development of rural industry. In February, we announced that farmers and agricultural producers will now have almost double the amount of land available to them for agricultural production. Specifically, we identified 62 agricultural areas of interest, totalling approximately 64,000 hectares to support agricultural development. This is a significant increase over the 19 areas that were formerly available, and this will help farmers expand their operations and also encourage new entrants to view agricultural production as a viable and profitable opportunity that can bolster activities in the rural regions.

In addition, just yesterday we announced our five-year marine infrastructure plan. This plan delivers on commitments to improve services at ferry terminals for the travelling public, including both residents and tourists. With almost \$28 million budgeted for the next five years, our government has set a plan in motion for the future; a plan that will ensure that our critical marine connections meet the needs of the

11,000 residents of remote communities via the 42 ports throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, whether we're discussing economic development, efficiency or services, a key point I want to emphasize about all of our vision initiatives is that they were developed through extensive feedback. Feedback from stakeholders, like our constituents and like the representatives from organizations in the gallery here today.

As our government developed a vision for maintaining economic strength while navigating unprecedented financial challenges, we availed of the insights of business, community, cultural and industrial stakeholders and we used these collective insights to develop a shared view of *The Way Forward*. We arrived at our guiding principles of doing better with less, increasing collaboration and challenging ourselves because this is what we heard from you.

Following priorities set in collaboration, we are finding ways to deliver much needed infrastructure despite our financial constraints. We're supporting industries with growth potential and we are finding efficiencies as a part of achieving our fair vision of a stronger tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, we are making our commitments concrete and continuing on our promise to take a whole of government approach to policy design and decision making. As I mentioned, our province was left in one of the most challenging situations we have ever faced. In following our vision faithfully, I am confident we will achieve great and enduring prosperity throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Today, I count myself proudly among the 40 men and women blessed with the distinct honour of serving in this Legislature representing the more than 500,000 residents throughout this great province. My colleagues here are men and women who care. They're women and men who signed up to help our people and our province, and I believe I can speak for all of us when I say that each and every one of us here is committed to doing just that.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I now move that a Select Committee be appointed to draft an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House on behalf of the constituents of Exploits and second the motion that a select committee be appointed to draft an Address in Reply to this year's Speech from the Throne.

I would like to take a quick moment to echo my fellow Member for Stephenville – Port au Port in thanking His Honour for the excellent job in delivering the Speech from the Throne. I believe all of us here today can agree that His Honour continues to be such a great figure in the communities that we all represent.

In the opening of the Speech from the Throne, His Honour acknowledged a number of milestones such as the 150th anniversary of Confederation, and the 35th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As well, he acknowledged the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge and Monchy-le-Preux, both pivotal battles for Canada and its allies that further demonstrated the virtues of strength, bravery and resilience in the face of great hardships and challenges. Our people have seen our fair share of challenges. We have seen wars, the rise of the baby boom and the related social change, and as well a moratorium, just to name a few.

In the face of all this adversity, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have always come together and made their way forward. Mr. Speaker, over the last year, our government has actioned a number of measures to address our fiscal situation. As my colleague for Stephenville – Port au Port mentioned, through *The Way Forward* we have taken new approaches to infrastructure, policy making, as well as engagement.

Yesterday, the Premier launched Phase Two of our vision called *Realizing our Potential*. The actions and goals outlined in Phase Two of our vision focuses on creating the conditions necessary for new private sector job creation and economic growth. One of these actions is the immediate establishment of a new Cabinet committee on jobs, as well as an external advisory committee of business leaders that will provide input and prospects on issues facing employers in our province.

Mr. Speaker, our government has also outlined targets for specific sector growth in industries such as agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and tourism. However, we are also supporting the traditional industries of the fishery, oil and gas, mining, as well as technology.

It is the responsibility of government to ensure that we are creating a sound economic environment that supports new opportunities that have always been found along our rich coastlines and throughout the remainder of this great province. You do not need to teach Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to innovate. You can't like in the edge of the North Atlantic for centuries without learning how to rise up and effectively meet new challenges as they arise.

As my colleague for Stephenville – Port au Port also mentioned, our province spends more per person on health care than any other province in this great nation of ours. It's quite shocking to think we also have some of the poorest health outcomes in this great nation. It has been very clear to our government that we must initiate change to improve the health of the province. We are committed to expanding the number of interdisciplinary primary health care teams across Newfoundland and Labrador – new teams that are helping individuals and families to maintain and improve their lot in life.

Mr. Speaker, this is the type of support our province needs, as we and our loved ones continue to age. Through better management of our health resources, as well as investments based on evidence, science and need, we will achieve better outcomes and provide the people of this province a system that fits their future's needs.

Our government is committed to ensuring we make smart and responsible investments to reverse the negative social and economic indicators that have prevented economic growth and driven our expenditures to record levels. We must think and act in a way that is long term and across government. We can no longer afford to be bound by short-term, reactionary thinking. We all will have a role to play in building and supporting our communities through generations and beyond. And that begins with a solid foundation.

Mr. Speaker, I would not be here standing today representing the great people of the great District of Exploits if I didn't believe in the actions that this government has set forth. As I mentioned when I started, we as a people have seen our fair share of challenges. However, I am firm in my opinion that this province as a whole will come out on the other side of this challenge. And, Mr. Speaker, we will be in a stronger position as was before, and in a better position to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, once again, it's a great honour to second the motion that a select committee be appointed to draft an Address in Reply in response to the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I'd like to take a moment to thank the Lieutenant Governor for his very eloquent delivery of the government's message today. I also want to thank the mover and seconders who just spoke, the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port and also the Member for Exploits who moved and seconded the motion this afternoon.

I want to take a moment to welcome and thank our judges for attending today. We are accompanied here today by leaders in business, labour, academia, church leaders, cultural groups, community representatives, some family

members here and tuned in quite often – and citizens who have either joined us here or are watching from home this afternoon.

I want to extend greetings to the caucus leader of the Third Party, to the Premier, to all Members of his hon. House. I want to take a moment to say how grateful I am for my own caucus team here in the House of Assembly, a team of seven of us who were elected to serve a very important role in our province. It's a role that we take very seriously. It's a role not only to represent the constituents who elected us, which is a very important role that we all hold as MHAs, but we've also been tasked to hold the government to account as the Official Opposition. That's our obligation, it's one that we take seriously, and it's one that we tend to fulfill vigorously.

A Throne Speech is supposed to be a day for laying out priorities. It's an opportunity for sharing strategies; a grand vision, if you like; also outlining specific initiatives for the coming year. It's supposed to be about charting a course and fulfilling promises and obligations that quite often are laid out in election platforms. It's also about giving hope and confidence to the people of our province, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it's supposed to instill a belief in people that the affairs of the province are in good hands. Even though His Honour today delivered the words very eloquently, the government's message that he shared, the Premier's message that he shared, is some cause for concern.

Sadly, the message today was not about what the province needs. At a time that we need hope, we get uncertainty. At a time that we need accountability, we hear blame. At a time that we need decisive course of action, we get more waffling and wavering. Instead of a way forward, in many respects today the speech was about the way behind and what we've seen in the past. We need the strength to stand up for our province. We need the strength to stand for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We need a government who is willing to stand for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when we get acquiesce.

Our province and our people need and deserve an economic plan to create the conditions for growth. What we are promised and what we are

getting from this government are two distinctly different things.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: We need a government that people can trust, but we have a government that people do not support. They do not have confidence in; are not satisfied with; cannot trust to keep their word; to own up to their actions and to be transparent about the work that they are doing.

Promise after promise has been broken by this government, and there are many. No layoffs. No job losses. No tax hikes. No erosion of education or health care. No political appointments. No hiding from scrutiny. Openness like never before and a level of accountability that they promise would be second to none. The government has not only abandoned their mandate that it was elected to deliver; it's also has abandoned its obligation to lead our province. It has abandoned our people. Very little talk today in the Throne Speech about people, Mr. Speaker, and very little talk about people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

The loudest cheers for the government, quite often, it don't come from the streets of communities throughout our province, they're not coming from kitchens and living rooms or workplaces of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the loudest cheers for our government are coming from Members opposite. They are the ones that cheer for this government.

Mr. Speaker, there's so much today missing from the Throne Speech about our future. What about Mistaken Point, just determined and designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site? The opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador with Mistaken Point are endless. It's critical for communities. It's going to help drive the economy. It's going to grow visitors to our province. It will provide opportunity for our people. No mention of it today.

Mr. Speaker, the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions that just finished up its work – very little reference to it. Reference to the development of a plan that *The Way Forward* document says we'll see in June. I look forward to the budget and to see what kind

of funding and endorsement for the plan we'll see in the budget coming up.

Also, it's important for us to take a moment to thank not only the Members of the House that worked very hard, travelled the province as part of the All-Party Committee, but also those stakeholders, health care providers, those interest groups. And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the citizens of the province who sat with committee members and poured out their hearts on the crises that they faced, the challenges they faced in their own lives and shared some very, very personal stories. We owe them our thanks, Mr. Speaker, and our appreciation for their commitment and their presentations to the all-party committee.

Mr. Speaker, without Members opposite cheering for and supporting the government, the government would be obligated to change its course and to come more in line with what the people of the province actually want and need, and what the people of the province expected from this government. They're now well into their second year of office and all Members opposite share a collective responsibility for the legacy of governance that the people of our province are really – they're wringing their hands and shaking their heads in disbelief.

Instead of leading, the government opposite has spent their time blaming. They love to blame the previous administration. They did it today in the Throne Speech. They blame boards; they blame individuals for everything that they have failed to achieve.

While we were in government we faced challenges, and challenges for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is nothing new. There have been many challenges in the history of our province, and governments have faced challenges. We faced a challenge in 2004, a significant challenge in 2009. We were the first and fastest province to come out of that fiscal challenge era in 2009. We faced it again in 2015, but we faced them with plans that worked, and history proves that.

Now the Liberals want people to believe that we hid the truth and the true state of the province's finances and we weren't open about it. Well, perhaps they were not paying attention during

the 2015 budget, because absolutely everyone, except for Members opposite, knew exactly what challenges we were facing. Everybody knew it, Mr. Speaker.

Oil revenues were down, way down, and it was hardly a secret. It was impacting every oil producing province in Canada, and other oil producing jurisdictions around the world. It wasn't a unique circumstance that existed solely here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They say they didn't know, and the premier says he didn't know. Oil prices are reported every day.

They said they had a plan. We now know they had no plan to face the challenges. They knew better, and we knew that they knew better. We did have a plan. We had a plan that was clear and coherent. It was comprehensive. Some say it was aggressive in some areas and it was laid out in our 2015 budget. It was a document that the credit rating agencies supported, but the Liberals voted against our plan.

While we focused on pulling back and reduce spending, streamlining delivery, the Liberals were calling for more and more spending. Right here in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, they came in here day after day, after our 2015 budget, asking and demanding for more.

We had an attrition plan to reduce the size of the public service while minimizing the impact on people and families. They voted against that. When we talked about reducing the size of the workforce by capitalizing on the attrition opportunities, they promised no job losses. They said not on their watch.

When we built schools, they criticized us for not making them bigger. When we announced the hospital, they criticized us for not including more health services within it. When we delayed a project to manage expenditures, they condemned us for not bulldozing ahead. They were all over the map. As they talked about fiscal control, they were still promising the moon. On our watch we were following a course, and the Liberals were determined to change that course.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they've certainly done that. They went into 2015 with hefty, red book commitments. It blew all of the modest but

affordable Blue Book commitments out of the water with all of their bells and whistles, and castles in the sky. They had chickens in every pot, they did and they threw in a kitchen sink just for good measure. It read like a Christmas wish book, Mr. Speaker. It was utterly unrealistic and it was completely unaffordable.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I remember vividly the very day that they announced their plan. It was only a few short days before the election in 2015. I remember it, and what I remember most is how fast and harsh the criticism was that they felt immediately. Media, academia, business, ordinary Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who had an interest and have an interest in their future, all saw it for what it was.

The Telegram published an editorial, said it's magic. That's right, magic, because nothing else can explain the bizarre expenditure revenue sheet the Liberals released this weekend. That's what they said.

MUN math Professor Tom Baird was shocked, saying that the Liberal leader expects a 10,000 per cent return on his diversification investments. We haven't heard much talk of that since the election. Economist Kerri Clark wrote: their numbers are wrong. That's about as straightforward as it could be put.

The Liberals assured the people they had an economic plan to pay for it, the LEAP Plan, the Liberal Economic Action Plan. Trust us, they said, Mr. Speaker. They still say trust us, but people did. The people of the province elected a Liberal government to deliver on their promises. People took them at their word. They took you at your word, but since the election it's been one excuse after another for abandoning those promises. They blame us for their unrealistic commitments.

It wasn't our party who made those promises, Mr. Speaker. It was their party who did so, and the truth is they had no plan. They had no plan and they've had no plan since then. Clearly, today they still don't have that clear plan almost midway through their second year after taking office. As the old saying goes, you reap what you sow.

Today, they're paying a political price. They're paying a political price for throwing caution to the wind in 2015, making promises they couldn't afford to keep. Since then, they've been trying to distance themselves from the red book commitments, the mandate that they were elected on, and they've published a new document, *The Way Forward*.

Yesterday, we heard about their report card – just yesterday. It's interesting how many governments get to scrap their election platform and create a new one, with taxpayers' dollars, to say here's what our plan is actually going to be. Not what we campaigned on, not what our campaign platform was, but here's our new *The Way Forward*. A much thinner document, there are 60-odd bullets of content. Many of them are very, very vague, devoid of substance in many areas, and some are as brief as one line, but when you actually look at the document you'll see how much is not there.

They make a commitment to return to surplus – no details how they're going to do that – and that passes as their economic plan. They say they're going to double tourism by 2020 compared with 2009. A very interesting commitment for them to make in their Way Forward document, their new plan, because what makes this even more interesting – some may think ludicrous – is they're actually referring to a plan we instituted as a government, and a commitment that we instituted.

Most of the period of time from 2009 to 2020 was time on our watch in which we saw tremendous growth in development of tourism. It was a strategy created and a strategy worked. Now a government who doesn't believe in strategies is taking that over.

The next time when they celebrate their stories, maybe they'll reflect on some of those strategic approaches that we brought forward as a government and they're continuing to pursue. So where is the mandate they actually were elected to deliver, and what happened to it?

If you think for a second that it's easy to lower expectations of the people of our province, than I believe government better think again, because Newfoundlanders and Labradorians expect

better, they deserve better and they will continue to demand better from their government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, as a new government, their very first commitment – it was referred to yesterday during the speech here in the House, to prorogue the House yesterday afternoon, and that was the commitment to take politics out of appointments. And we know that that commitment actually had a very early grave.

They still talk about merit-based appointments and taking the politics out, but no government in living memory has politicized the most senior non-political role in a public service – never before. I can't find it anywhere in the country actually, when the Liberals filled the clerk of the Executive Council with a former Liberal leadership candidate. It's never happened before, Mr. Speaker, never, and that was just the start of it.

Last fall, they went to the people and they talked about their new flatter, leaner management structure, and they moved out managers. They fired management employees, senior executive members and assistant deputy ministers, and at great cost of taxpayers. Let's not forget, at a great cost to taxpayers. They fill so many of those positions with former Liberal candidates and Liberal friends.

They celebrated their flatter, leaner management system. They call it fiscally responsible, but, Mr. Speaker, we know that people of the province are smarter than what the Liberals give them credit for. Their very first red book commitment, all the way down we see example after example of commitments made by the government that they're not delivering on.

Government's approach to fiscal and economic management has been wrong. The Premier, what he even said as Leader of the Opposition in 2015. When we said we had to reduce the size of the public service and increase taxes, he publicly stated it was the wrong direction and the wrong thing to do. He's doing exactly that and more as the Premier today.

They now say reverse the HST increase, leaving the province with a loss in revenue of hundreds

of millions, or over a hundred million dollars in a very short period of time, at a time when oil revenues were on free fall. Then they persuaded Ottawa to stop the increase from being implemented, changed their minds very shortly after and brought it in on July 1, six months later; over \$100 million in revenue gone and lost. It was seen by many as a lazy approach to revenue shortfalls that left consumers with no money to spend and employers with no money to hire, when you look at all the taxes and additional fees and burden they put on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians last year.

Mr. Speaker, they said they would take some time to decide how to do some expenditure reduction, they referred to it as. The Minister of Finance stood here in the House of Assembly and said there will be three key decision points and there would be a fall budget to announce those expenditure reductions.

In the spring, when they announced there would be revenue generation, it was code name for taxes and fees. We know that expenditure reduction is code name for cuts, layoffs and job losses. They stated in the fall they were going to do that. There is going to be a second expenditure reduction. A second decision point, but when the fall came there was no second budget. The Premier was to say, look, we all misunderstood. That wasn't what was said by the Minister of Finance. That's what he told the people of the province. It would be a fiscal update, not a fall budget, when it was clearly, in the Budget Speech, talked about by the minister.

Now that we're well into our second year, that threat of job losses and cuts and so on continues to strangle the public service. But not only does it strangle the public service, it's the impact on the greater province that we must also think about as well. Because all the public servants, they do not know where the government is going to lead with these cuts and reductions in expenditures. Instead of spending their money and making investments in their properties, in their homes and their families, they're pocketing their money because they don't know what the future holds, and that's a negative impact on our economy – tens of thousands of public employees in a perpetual state of uncertainty.

Who's going to build or buy a new home? Who's going to remodel their kitchen, replace their windows or siding or shingles, or build a new fence or take a vacation? Who's going to go to a restaurant? Who's going to buy a steak instead of a hamburger? It all impacts the economy when people are measuring and watching their money, not knowing what is in the future for them.

What happens then? Well, business sales fall. Business hiring falls. Business confidence and investment falls. The level of employment falls. Unemployment increases, but revenue falls – and we find ourselves the only province in the Canadian Federation today that's experiencing an economic decline.

Mr. Speaker, that's not on us; that's entirely on the watch of (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the credit rating agencies saw our plan and liked it. What they saw, they maintained our ratings. They felt confident in it; they felt we had a good plan. Not so much for what the Liberals had to bring forward. Without exception, they issued warnings and lowered the boom on ratings. That raised the cost of borrowing and the size of the debt. That was the indictment of the current government's failed fiscal and economic approach. They were the independent reviewers of their approach versus ours.

So we have this perpetual uncertainty. We have concerns throughout our province. We had a waste of months of HST revenue. We had a waste of public money now on consultations – they're duplicating a study on a fixed link that was done a few years ago. Look at the funds spent with McInnes Cooper, duplicating in-house work on collective bargaining, and their communication strategists duplicating the work of in-house communication staff. The decision to pay the cost of severing management-level employees and then pay the cost of hiring new Liberal friends to replace some of those is a colossal waste of talent and revenue.

Now, as they celebrate, as they did yesterday, the moving of government offices from rental space to government-owned space, they're also

about to uproot a government office here, not far from the Confederation Building, in a government-owned building, and move it to a yet-to-be-determined likely rental space in the Premier's backyard. Uprooting and moving 30 families, all at a cost to government, without a budget to do so, without an estimate on cost, without a location known and without a good reason for doing so. And one can't help but to wonder there's no other reason to move that office than pure political gain.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, you don't have to wonder why people are not happy. If Members opposite don't believe that people aren't happy with them, then they're not listening to what people are saying. They're not listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

People don't like what they see; they don't like what they hear. And this, the government's second Throne Speech, is not the correction course that people were looking for. People were looking for hope, they were looking for opportunity, and they were looking for a future here in Newfoundland and Labrador. What we've heard here today, in many ways, is the same old, same old.

Mr. Speaker, there were some comments today in the speech that I think are worth referencing in particular, that were quite interesting to me, to hear what the government had talked about. The feasibility study for drug treatment court: I look forward to seeing it. I think it's going to be, no doubt, a benefit for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. A Serious Incident Response Team: We look forward to hearing more about that as well. Sexual assault response pilot program and providing advice and legal advice to victims of sexual assault – these are all good initiatives from the government and we look forward to hearing more from them on them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: They are good initiatives and they are good things to do. There's a constant evolution of providing more creative programs and services to the people of the province, and this is an area that's very important, many of these.

Increasing child care subsidies for low-income families by changing the eligibility threshold: We want to know more about that, but it looks like it's going in the right direction. Increase early learning and child care supplement for qualified child care educators: It is important to recruit pay and attract educators into early childhood education.

They talked about full-day kindergarten today in the Throne Speech, and talked about it as a success. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, and I know first-hand from talking to constituents, as do my colleagues, that there has been many challenges with full-day kindergarten as well. It's not all rosy. It's not all fantastic. There have been challenges for families, there have been challenges for children, and there certainly have been challenges expressed by educators. In our education system, there are inclusion challenges – no mention of that in today's Speech from the Throne. There are resource challenges. Larger class sizes are impacting our students and our teachers as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's not all bad, what we see in the Throne Speech or what we heard today, not a lot of detail, and we do look forward to more detail. Interesting, I noted, there's no mention of Mistaken Point. There's very little reference to expenditure reduction that was supposed to happen six months ago. I mentioned reference to inclusion for education. And what about the carbon tax and what the impact of carbon tax is going to have on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? No reference to that at all. No reference today to the royalty regime, generic royalty regime – critical for offshore exploration and future production and benefits to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of items, and I have a long list of items that were not mentioned in today's Throne Speech that I expected to see and I hoped to see, and I don't know why some of these are not there. There's no reason why Mistaken Point couldn't be celebrated. Early in the Throne Speech today there are many references to culture, celebrations for Newfoundland and Labrador, reflection on our past. It speaks volumes nationally and internationally about the cut of the jib of our people and how wonderful and how great we are to other people, not only just

here in our province but around the world; celebrations about our history and what we have to offer those who might want to visit here.

But it still appears to me that we still have a government – they haven't learned much since taking office in 2015. We know there's going to be time for growing and learning. It gives everyone a reason to pause and to be concerned and to brace for next week's budget.

It's unlikely that there will be anything in the budget next week that's going to drive economic growth that we so desperately need. Mr. Speaker, at a time when we've seen and experienced over the last several months rising oil production – I've been hearing really good production levels in our oil industry, prices have been stable and favourable against the government's estimates. The dollar exchange rate has been favourable as well. We fully expect to see a lower deficit in this year and a lower deficit from what's happened in 2016-2017 and a lower deficit for '17 and '18 because those world indicators are moving in the right direction to benefit the government of the day. Not necessarily the result of economic growth or fiscal management, and let's not forget this is a government who predicts a shrinking economy.

Nonetheless, they have once again applauded themselves into thinking that they are on the right track. They did it yesterday; they're doing it today. But how can a shrinking economy benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? Every other province in Canada, even oil-producing companies who had struggles in the downturn of the oil prices, they're turning the corner. While Newfoundland and Labrador continues in free fall, other provinces are doing well. And that should tell us something.

They talk about not raising taxes this year and no new taxes. Well, what about lowering the burden on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: What about lessening those significant burdens they placed on hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – people who work hard to earn lower incomes. How about our seniors? Are they going to take steps this year to lower the tax and fee burden placed

on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? I can assure you easing that tax burden will take that money and put it back into the economy, and it will have a positive impact on families and on employers.

Mr. Speaker, this government appears to be so focused on counting beans and hitting targets that they fail to step back and notice what they are actually doing to the economy and the impact they're having on people. I mentioned earlier the Throne Speech is almost absent on a focus on people, which is terrible. You don't cure an illness by killing the patient. You can't celebrate targets if, in the process, you leave the economy in ruins, too weak to grow, and tens of thousands of fewer people working in our province. They've placed all the burden on families and on employers of this province.

What about demanding Ottawa live up to its constitutional obligations to ensure that we have comparable levels of service at comparable levels of taxation? They're letting Ottawa off the hook – off the hook for their obligation to step in. Because the government's approach to federal-provincial regulations is simply to say: All good here; no problems.

But simply to say nothing and do nothing, it fails the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, I'm not advocating for an all-out war with Ottawa. I'm not suggesting that or advocating for that at all. The people of the province are simply looking for a government who's going to represent Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first, instead of representing Ottawa here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, government says they're facing tough times. As I said earlier in my comments this afternoon, it's not the first time that Newfoundland and Labrador has faced troubled waters and difficult times. But I do believe, as we have in the past, that with proper planning, with strong leadership, we can weather this storm as we've done before.

Last year's budget forecasted more than 30,000 job losses over the next four years. The government seems to be okay with that, and that's part of the reason that people in our

province, real people, people all over Newfoundland and Labrador, are so upset. It's the real reason they're upset, they're frustrated and they're fearful. With a government that thinks it is tolerable, how will our province endure this until we finally get a government that's ready to face the challenges as they need to be faced?

So, Mr. Speaker, I challenge Members opposite today, especially caucus and backbenchers over across the way, because they have a significant power in this whole mix of politics in our world and constituents and people – they have a significant power to change how business is being done.

I say to them don't applaud for things that don't warrant it or that you don't believe in. Stop supporting an approach that's not working. You can all lead change. You can effect change that's going to be in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. You can demand better. People are demanding better. Mr. Speaker, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve better.

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 am pleased to stand here today to respond to the Speech from the Throne, to be here with my colleague from my own caucus, with my colleagues in the Official Opposition and all my colleagues in government as well. It is an important day in the province when we have the Speech from the Throne. I recognize that our leaders from the various aspects of our community think it's important enough to be here with us as well.

So we need to take the time to talk about what it was that we heard here today. Just 12 months ago have passed since I stood in this hon. House with my colleagues to reply to the March 2016 Speech from the Throne. At the time I said, among other things, that a constant message of

doom and gloom can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, a year later, we find ourselves in recession. Consumer confidence in our province is by far the lowest of all the Canadian provinces, and by quite a large margin. I heard nothing in today's Speech from the Throne that will address this downward spiral; no message of hope for young people who would like to put down roots in the province they love; no relief for seniors who were so adversely affected by last year's budget; no plan for exactly how to attract and retain the immigrants they claim will flood our shores in the next five years.

Speeches from the Throne tend to have lots of fine words and embroidered phrases. In this case, government is glossing over the grim reality of an austerity budget with facile phrases like doing better with less. I say, ask women if they are doing better with less. Ask seniors in our province if they are doing better with less. Ask people with disabilities if they are doing better with less. Ask the students in our post-secondary educational institutions, are they doing better with less.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to find out what a government is really about, it's not the words that are in a Throne Speech, you'll read the budget. For example, the 2016 Speech from the Throne had this to say, "My Government recognizes the critical role education has to play in creating a strong future for our province." Then along came a budget that taxed books and closed libraries.

Last year's Speech from the Throne identified poverty and inequality as problems which affect all people in the province, but *Budget 2016* demanded much more from those with little or nothing than from the top earners in the province. It was an anti-literacy budget that instead of tackling the root causes of poor health, compounded them through such mean penny-pinching measures as cutting adult dental coverage and reimbursement for many over-the-counter drugs, and eliminating bus passes, and it did absolutely nothing to shore up an economy in free fall.

No wonder the public backlash was so strong, Mr. Speaker. Broken promise after broken promise, one financial burden after another imposed on people with very little to begin with. People reacted as they did because they felt betrayed. An unfair share of the burden of *Budget 2016* was downloaded to low- and middle-income earners. The disjointed and uncoordinated mirage of taxes and fees was devoid of any clear social or economic objectives. The budget wasn't founded on clear values, and it offered people no hope for the future.

The Premier later blamed government's budget woes on bad communications. I agree that the communications left a great deal to be desired, but the fundamental problem was not bad communications; it was a bad budget.

The usual suspects say government is spending too much money. We're certainly spending too much money on Muskrat Falls. This government continues to blame the previous government for that project without ever offering any suggestion of exactly how to reduce the onerous costs that ordinary people will otherwise be expected to pay. Doubling electricity bills cannot be an option, but it's being presented by the Premier. Government must find a way to make electricity affordable.

The Liberals promised better management, but the clear sense the public is getting is that nobody is in charge. The promise of openness and transparency in government has gone by the wayside, Mr. Speaker.

People living downstream from Muskrat Falls are living in genuine fear, but there is still no independent expert panel to review safety issues associated with the intrinsic instability of the North Spur. Still no sign of the long overdue EY report; still no up-to-date reporting from the lame duck oversight committee, but the shroud of secrecy extends well beyond that disastrous project.

Our government was one of the first to be co-opted into divide and conquer federalism by abandoning a united provincial effort for a new health accord with fair and equitable health transfers from the federal government. There was no public discussion of this turn of events,

no debate in the House of Assembly on a matter with profound consequences for the provision of health care and for the future financial position of our province; Just a surprise announcement in the days before the Christmas season.

Another secret deal hatched behind closed doors; again, totally out of the blue, government announced it was accepting a federal government proposal to replace \$280 million for fisheries development and renewal, with about \$100 million from an Atlantic-wide program. Apparently the Premier thinks \$100 million from the federal government is better than \$280 million from the federal government.

Then there's the deal that beats all the secret deals. I'm talking here about the government's ideological commitment to enrich the for-profit sector at the expense of taxpayers through a blanket commitment to so-called P3s – public-private partnerships – with virtually no public disclosure.

Value for money sounds good, Mr. Speaker, everybody wants value for money. I want value for public money, but the so-called value for money assessment released to support the decision to use P3s for the Corner Brook hospital and long-term care facility doesn't convince me. I was shocked by the lack of public documentation. The assessment was done by companies that have a vested interest in seeing public procurement go the route of the P3. The publicly disclosed material is skimpy; the rest is shrouded in secrecy. Crucial information is being withheld from the public.

I want to be clear, Mr. Speaker. I don't question the need for a hospital and a long-term care facility for Corner Brook, nor that matter for a replacement for the antiquated Waterford Hospital and Her Majesty's Penitentiary, but I fundamentally oppose an approach in which private profits trump the interests of taxpayers in a dodge designed to hide long-term debt from public scrutiny, and that's what's being kept from the people in this province.

The Premier likes to say he doesn't want to burden future generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with debt, but that is exactly what these P3 arrangements will do. In addition, tenders are likely to be so complex that the

playing field will be tilted in favour of multinational conglomerates with head offices outside the province to the detriment of Newfoundland and Labrador-based companies. We see this in the bids for the long-term care centre.

Essentially, government is saying: Trust us; P3s are the least-cost option. Sound familiar? That's exactly what happened with Muskrat Falls and the secret deal was hatched that we're paying for dearly today and will continue to pay dearly for long into the future.

Mr. Speaker, the forerunner to today's Speech from the Throne was the so-called *Way Forward* document government announced in November. There were targets for all kinds of things in that document, but when it came to jobs *The Way Forward* was taking us backward. There was no jobs target, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, there was only an inconsequential reference to jobs at all.

Our objections to this glaring omission appear to have registered, Mr. Speaker. Chapter 2 of *The Way Forward*, announced yesterday at the eleventh hour so the government could grade its own report card, does talk about jobs, but it is not at all clear where the predicted increase in employment will come from. Once again, a lot of talk without a plan for action. I see committees being set up. We've got so many committees but still no plans for action.

Government has attempted to shrink our way to prosperity. In no way am I diminishing the seriousness of the province's financial situation, but saving money alone will not create a strong and resilient economy. Cutting jobs and services is not the way to go. We must recognize the vital stabilizing role a government should play in the economy, particularly when the private sector is going through a rough patch.

There is a strong consensus among economists, including Nobel Prize winning economists, that cutting jobs during a recession compounds the problem. Even conservative economic analysts, like the International Monetary Fund, now realize that inequality is bad for the economy and for political and societal stability.

It is not okay for more than 20 per cent of our children to live in poverty. It is not okay for our

unemployment rate to be headed for 20 per cent and beyond. It is not okay for our power bills to double.

This government's first year wasn't entirely bleak. I have been encouraged by a couple of progressive measures – both, I might add, originating with this caucus. Last week, we saw the release of the comprehensive report from the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. A committee that started with a private Member's motion –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – from my colleague, the Member for St. John's Centre, and I'm pleased that our recent private Member's motion calling for pay equity legislation received unanimous support in this House. We will be diligent in demanding action to make the recommendations of the all-party committee report and the intent of the pay equity resolution a reality.

Mr. Speaker, a Throne Speech should signify a fresh start for a government. It should contain vision and hope. It should be a clear roadmap of concrete actions that will lead to an improved way of life for people. This government says it is providing a new way forward but, sadly, I see no sign of the bold and creative leadership that this province needs in these difficult times.

Our challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to restore hope in our people, to encourage young people to stay, to treat seniors with respect, to harness the creativity and ingenuity of our people. It is in difficult times like these that the people most need their government to step up and provide bold leadership. Next week's budget would be a good place to start, and, Mr. Speaker, I wait in hope.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is with great pleasure that I rise in this House of Assembly today to respond to the Speech from the Throne and the Hon. Frank Fagan, the Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's also a pleasure for me to be joined and surrounded by colleagues and Cabinet Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker, my plan today was to stand in this House and really just seek a unified Legislature to deal with the unprecedented challenges that we have to deal with in our province. How people, with a straight face, can stand in his House today and not accept a responsibility for their actions, I just cannot go there.

Even though I would like to stand here today and seek a united voice to bring to the people of our province from this Legislature, to listen to what I've had to listen to today from the Leader of the Opposition who represents the PC Party, and some of what I just heard from the leader of the Third Party, I am telling you, in a previous life, I would have been recommending Graval. To stand up here and really respond to a Speech from the Throne, what we've heard today is unconscionable.

I am pleased today to be flanked by Members of the caucus and Members of this Cabinet who have been really steadfast. They've been unwavering in their support that we have been afforded the ability to generate an agenda for the future of our province, Mr. Speaker. Today, what we've seen in the Speech from the Throne really outlines and lays out a foundation for our province for a stronger tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen dark days in the past in Newfoundland and Labrador, but leaders from all across this country have told me, when we have met, that these are unprecedented times in Newfoundland and Labrador, that no other province are facing the challenges that we have to face today.

I would be naive today to think that things will not get better, Mr. Speaker. They will get better. They will get better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: But I will tell you now that my experience is that success does not come gift

wrapped. Success does not come wrapped in gifts. Mr. Speaker, you have to plan for it; you have to work for it. The work has got to go in, in planning for the future of our province. The previous administration, I would say, was lazy in their planning, lazy in their management and they've will now not accept the responsibility for their actions.

Now, in the Throne Speech today, as we started the Throne Speech it laid out some of the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. I would say we did celebrate our young men in 1916 in Beaumont-Hamel. We have every reason to celebrate, even though it was a dark day in the history of what was the Dominion of Newfoundland and Labrador at the time. When you look at the lessons that were learned just a few months after that in Monchy-le-Preux, when we saw Newfoundlanders at the time, they did their job, they did not look back, they withstood the battles and the challenges that they faced. It was a fresh battle for them. It was a new day, Mr. Speaker, and they rose to the challenge.

Not every day comes with failure; many days come with success, but you have to plan for those success. You build on what you know; you build on what you have and you deal with the hand that you've been dealt. I can assure you that people on this side of the House they were dealt with a hand at the end of the election in 2015 that no one anticipated.

When I listen to the Leader of the Opposition today talk about that everyone should have known, I will give you reasons why everyone did not know. On September of 2015 a letter went to the – he was the premier at the time. The premier of the day did not respond.

In a number of debates that we had during that election when he was asked point blank: What is the financial situation of this province? He would not respond to me, would not respond to the people of our province. Mr. Speaker, the facts were hidden.

In June of 2015 the Members opposite knew that the Astaldi contract had issues, nearly \$ 300 million – and I suggest they should hang their heads today, Mr. Speaker. They had that information in June of 2015; they hid it from the people of the province. They hid the financial

situation of this province. They would not release – would not release – Public Accounts. It was this minister right here that released the Public Accounts for the PC government in 2015.

And they have the gall today to stand here and talk about accountability and about a plan for the future. Well, I will assure you, Mr. Speaker, today that their plan for the future, their election platform said today's oil price would be somewhere around \$80 a barrel, dust it off – dust it off; that is what it was saying. It also had revenue from Nalcor that would never see the light of day. That was their plan. That was the plan that is now collecting dust and they are still standing by it. So I would ask them today, go check the price of oil and tell me today does he still stand by that plan. I think not, Mr. Speaker.

They were a government that was strictly addicted to the price of oil; we know that, Mr. Speaker. That is what got us in this situation that we're into today. They did not plan for the future. They talked about a legacy fund. They talked about a sovereignty fund. Mr. Speaker, they did not have it.

I also want to remind people of this province today – and I really wasn't anticipating coming here today to just lay the blame game. As he just said earlier that they would not lay the blame game, but they went on for nearly 30 minutes to try and blame their actions on this government, and we will not tolerate that. I am not expecting –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: We will not accept the responsibility for their inaction, Mr. Speaker. We will not accept the responsibility for them not planning for the future of this province. They had an opportunity of nearly \$25 billion over 10 years; did not plan; did not put one cent away for the future of this province.

They left it no different than a gambler would do. They laid a bet on the price of oil. It was a coin toss for the future of our province. We are not willing to leave the future of this province to a coin toss, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I will lay that out in facts. I just mentioned that their election platform said that today the price should be around \$80 a barrel. So when he talks about pixie dust and he talks about fairy tales, that is a fairy tale that he is referring to, that today's price of oil would be somewhere around \$80 barrel. Who – who – in their right mind would ever suggest and build a future of this province on \$100 a barrel? Who would do that? Who would do that, Mr. Speaker?

Well, I will tell you who did that. It was the previous administration that did that. Let me lay this out for you. The world has been watching the price of oil and the barrel of oil now for many, many decades. Some would suggest that it's been nearly a century – nearly a century pricing a barrel of oil. In less than 15 months – less than 15 months – in the history of tracking the price of oil have we seen oil above \$100 a barrel – nearly a century tracking oil; 15 months.

Mr. Speaker, they built and they suggested and they made a commitment on a project that would see the price of oil never going below \$100 a barrel for 55 years – 55 years, Mr. Speaker. They did that, Mr. Speaker. They made a conscious decision, ignored what history had told us, ignored all of that and went ahead and made the commitment for 55 years.

I would ask the Members opposite, if they had to do that all over again, is that the decision they would still make? Today we heard it was. They stood by their plan, Mr. Speaker, for the future of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I know by now the Leader of the Opposition has already probably done his media, run to the mic and talked about all things that – no plan for this and no plan for that. Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, if the previous administration had planned for the future of this province we would not be in the situation we're into today.

He talks about a province that's in recession, Mr. Speaker. Well, all you have to do is dust off the economic indicators that they put out there in 2015. It would have said this province is in the same situation that we're into today. That was their message because they did not plan for the future of this province.

As I said earlier, the AG went looking for a \$5 billion infrastructure plan. Where was it, Mr. Speaker? It was on the back of a napkin or on the back of an envelope. They talk about an accountable government, Mr. Speaker, guess who couldn't find it? The AG couldn't find it, \$5 billion. They talk about politics and decisions. What is a better example of a government planning for the future and they work on the back of an envelope at some restaurant somewhere, Mr. Speaker, when they developed a five-year infrastructure plan.

Mr. Speaker, it kind of reminds me of a little line that says this: It says that facts tell but it's stories that sell. The Leader of the Opposition today, he wants to spin a tale. He wants to spin a story, ignore the facts, ignore his own facts and continue to hide the real information from the people of this province. That is the way they governed, Mr. Speaker, and they did it that way.

Mr. Speaker, the Members on this side of the House today, we're left to deal with the aftermath, to deal with the situation we've inherited, but we will deal with it. We will deal with it in a responsible way. We have Members here with this caucus; they are in touch with their districts. They are listening to the people of this province.

None of us are proud of the choices we had to make last year, but when the Member opposite talks about the rating agencies and he has the gall and the nerve today to stand in this House and say the rating agencies weren't looking. Mr. Speaker, he obviously wasn't talking to them because the very same group that we talked to in December, the very first day in transition when we were told we needed \$400 million to get through December, he wasn't talking to anybody.

There was no borrowing strategy in place for this province, Mr. Speaker. How would he ever know about the rating agencies in this province? To stand here today and be on the public record and make comments like that is irresponsible and is – yes, you're right, it is shameful, Mr. Speaker, to stand by that record and stand by the stories that they want to spin is unfair to the next generation of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne today, there were a number of thrusts in that, and I really want to get to this because we have outlined a plan for the future of this province. The first and foremost thing we had to do was secure the footing, the foundation, the financial footing of this province, because it was in a state. It was in a mess, Mr. Speaker. It took us some time to do it, but I will tell you, just like I told the media a few minutes ago, just like I told the people of this province a few minutes ago, this province is in much better shape today because of the work of this government. We will leave this government, whenever it is the people make the decision, it will be in a better shape than we inherited it.

Mr. Speaker, their plan, the plan that he still stands by, last year would have – at budget time this year would have meant \$2.7 billion in deficit. We are going to meet our targets. It's the due diligence that we had to put into this. Yeah, it do come with its challenges, Mr. Speaker, but people are investing in their province.

The Speech from the Throne today talked about outcomes and talked about jobs. I say to the Leader of the Third Party, yes, it does talk about jobs. Phase Two, realizing the potential of our province, Mr. Speaker, talks a lot about jobs. When you look at the planning by the previous administration, there was no planning for where we are today in terms of securing jobs for the future.

We talked about outcomes, we talk about jobs and we talk about health for the people of our province. So I will take a few minutes just to expand for a few minutes on where we are with that. When we talk about – they often talk about investment. The previous administration often talked about investments in health, investments in health and education, investments in all kinds of things, but we want to talk about outcomes, Mr. Speaker.

When you put the taxpayers' money, when you put the people of this province who work so hard to contribute to their province, when you take the responsibility to invest in things like health care, you expect outcomes, Mr. Speaker. You expect positive outcomes. So if they did such a great job, why is it today that the health

indicators in our province are not doing so well?
We are not doing so well.

The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is they managed the province by really, essentially responding to the last person they talked to or some question of the day, or the recent polling numbers. They want to talk a lot about that, but you cannot run a province like that. You put in place a way forward plan, which is what we did.

Mr. Speaker, each department of this government, they take a critical look at the money they spend. They take a look at where the outcomes would come from. They measure those outcomes, Mr. Speaker, and it is evidence based.

I want to speak to the Leader of the Third Party; yes we do, Mr. Speaker. We do measure the impacts socially and we measure the impact economically. They are not disconnected, because if you do not manage the financial affairs of your province, it has an impact. It has an impact on those social programs.

In the past, previous administrations used to talk about: are we going to pay the large oil companies to run Holyrood. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no difference. Do you pay the big banks if you do not keep your financial house in order? So they do go hand in hand, Mr. Speaker. The economy and the social programs we put in place for the people of this province are connected.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, I want to talk about jobs. With the major projects that we have, as they become spooling down and they become (inaudible) and they finish up, it's important for us as a government. Mr. Speaker, I would say it was important that these decisions could have been made much, much earlier and plan for where we are today but that did not happen. We are left now, Mr. Speaker, with the responsibility to do that.

There is a way, Mr. Speaker. We will not give up. We will not give up on the traditional industries that laid the foundation for this province. We will not give up. There are new jobs in old industries, Mr. Speaker, as you modernize those industries. That is what we will plan to do.

We will extract and add and create employment on old industries, but in new ways of doing them. Modern approaches that you will see in the ground fishery, in the aquaculture, the agriculture, in oil, in mining, in tourism, just to name a few We will use our education institutions to create jobs for future Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to address, because it came up in one of the responses today, talked about – as the Leader of the Third Party talked about me saying that \$100 million was more than \$280 million. Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, that is not what I said. That is not the truth, Mr. Speaker. That is not what I said. I did not say that. There is more to come.

I hear Members opposite today talking about standing up for this province. We do stand up for our province, and I will tell you this, we are delivering for the people of our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: So, Mr. Speaker, when we do work with our federal colleagues, there are people answering the phones. We are not getting answering machines or emails that go unanswered. We are in touch with our federal colleagues, and they understand the situation of this province.

So I say to the leader of the Third Party, yeah, I do know the difference between \$280 million that is set to be announced, but I also know what it's like to take \$100 million that is coming your way. There is a difference between an announcement and a deliverable, too. There's a big difference in going to The Rooms and announcing that you're going to do something and seeing the empty chairs and seeing something delivered – and it will be delivered.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk about jobs and I talk about the resilience of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I can give you a number of examples. I will say that Mistaken Point is a jewel in the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it will create employment. So will places like Burlington, and so will places like Fogo. It is the people in those communities that will use innovation, new ways of doing things. They will work hard. It will be innovation; it

will be perspiration, Mr. Speaker. People will work hard in very different ways of doing things.

We're seeing it at The Gathering; we're seeing it on Fogo Island, Mr. Speaker. I'm seeing it in my own district at Trails, Tales and Tunes, and in communities like Cow Head that are using the tourism in ways that are unique to them, unique to their own communities, doing it in different ways. People are excited to come to Newfoundland and Labrador. They know that this province is a rare find globally when you look at it and you compare us. We have stunning landscapes. There are lots of good reasons to visit Newfoundland and Labrador. Our people are unmatched.

I challenge the Leader of the Opposition when he talks about this Speech from the Throne that it does not include people. Mr. Speaker, it's all about people. It's all about people. It's like people in Gander and that area that are being celebrated on Broadway with *Come from Away*. It's creating tourism activity for people of this province. It's just another example of all the great things that are going on when you put a focus and when you listen to people.

So it is about better outcomes, it is about creating jobs, and it is about the health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Mr. Speaker, I will talk a little bit about that. Spending over 30 years in health care, I understand the impact that mental health has on our province. I understand that first hand. I've dealt with many, many families, many, many young people and for those – and I do appreciate the work that went into the all-party committee. They did great work. The numbers and countless of people that fed into the work of the all-party committee, Mr. Speaker, we do need to commend them for stepping up.

We do need to commend them for stepping up, but let's not as a party; let's not as an individual stand here today and try and take credit for the work of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We need to do it for them, Mr. Speaker. We need to do it for the young people of this – their lives are being robbed of opportunities in years to come if we do not deal with this. If we do not deal with mental illness; if we do not deal with addictions that are running across not just Newfoundland

and Labrador, but is running rampant across this country. We have a Minister of Health here that understands this issue.

We have people all around this province that will support the work of the committee, and we will get those recommendations. We will implement and put in place a plan to deal with it, Mr. Speaker. We will not walk away. We will not walk away from an institution that opened up in 1855. Mr. Speaker, 1855 – no electricity. Think about it.

They look at us today and say that we are not willing to govern; that we are not willing to manage or we are in-compassionate to the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, that is not the way it is. That was left unaddressed when we had more money than ever in the history of this province. They could not even deal with it when there was more money than at any other time in the history of this province, and now they're saying today it's a priority. Mr. Speaker, you put your money where your mouth is. They refuse to put their money where their mouth is.

We will deal with that, Mr. Speaker. We will look for ways even in these difficult times to replace those buildings that were opened in the mid-1800s. Mr. Speaker, time has passed. We need to deal with it. Just like we need to deal with the replacement of long-term care sites in Central; replacement of long-term care sites in Corner Brook, hospitals in Corner Brook. We will not give up on improving the health care of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we will not measure our success by the amount of money that we will spend on it. We will measure success by the outcomes we deliver, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, as a province we face many challenges, many challenges, but we see so many opportunities on a daily basis, too. We understand that in just a few short years, as was mentioned earlier, that we have to deal with the doubling of electricity rates in this province. Mr. Speaker, that was a decision that they were standing by, believing that oil would cover every single sin of the past. That you just simply write a cheque based on the oil royalties that would come in.

Well, that money is not there. It was built on false assumptions. But, as was mentioned in the Throne Speech today, they have put us in a situation where getting out of this project is very, very difficult, with the commitments that have been made.

If there is one thing that the previous administration did a very good job at is locking down that agreement on Muskrat Falls. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing that they did, is they locked down that. I remember the previous administration talking about loopholes that you can drive a Mack truck through. Well, I will guarantee you they locked this one down. They locked this one down pretty good.

I will tell you this, they locked it down so good, this is what they've done. The price of escalation, the overruns on that project – and some of that has been mentioned here before that we have Emera now in a situation to have a big investment in the transmission line in our province, Mr. Speaker. The escalation, the price increases, all borne by Nalcor.

I'll tell you how well they locked down that agreement. I'll tell you how well they locked it down. They were in negotiations with Emera. And guess what happens if the price of the Maritime Link goes up? Nalcor has to come in and help with the price escalation, help with the price increases on the Emera line, but Emera does not have to come into Newfoundland and Labrador. That is not the case – just reverse. Now, they say we should have learned lessons from the past. We should have learned lessons from the Upper Churchill. Why did they ignore that? Why was that ignored is a good question.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that this province cannot afford the doubling of electricity rates. We cannot afford our community halls, our recreation centres, our churches, people that are living in our small communities right now, our seniors that are living on fixed incomes, the most vulnerable in our society, on very low incomes – we understand that in just a few years from now they cannot afford to see their electricity bills double, Mr. Speaker. We understand that. We have to plan for that, but we are not going to wait until the night before, or the eleventh hour, like the previous administration has done.

In their own election platform, they included revenue from Nalcor that would never see the light of day. So when you look at rate mitigation, they had no plan for it. All they said was that the people of this province, the ratepayers of this province, would pay for 100 per cent of the power, regardless if they use it or not. That was a commitment that they made to rates in this province. We understand that we have to put rate mitigations in place, and we will plan for it.

The people of this province cannot afford 22-cent power in this province. If you look at other provinces that are dependent on hydroelectricity as their source of energy, look no farther than Quebec, look no farther than Manitoba, two provinces that should be similar to us. They have the cheapest power in the country, Mr. Speaker.

Our province, based on the commitment they have made, would have been the most expensive, Mr. Speaker. That is the position they put this province in. Yes, Mr. Speaker, they should hang their heads because it is shameful what they've left this province in, the situation they've left it in.

Mr. Speaker, added to that – and I won't get into this. We all understand the demographics we're facing as a province. We have to plan for that as well. When I mention home supports, when I mention long-term care, this is what we are thinking about. Even though it's years out, Mr. Speaker, we must plan for it today.

So, Mr. Speaker, planning for our future, addressing the financial challenges positions our province in the position to be able to fight the challenges in the future, and we will do that. I'm optimistic about our future, Mr. Speaker.

I will say before I finish up, I heard a few minutes ago that it's not on us. The Leader of the Opposition said that it's not on us. Well, it's quite different from what the Member for Mount Pearl South said a few nights ago. I have to give him some credit, Mr. Speaker. I don't always agree with his comments on Twitter, and he's probably going a little crazy on Twitter today, who knows, but I will give him some credit, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: Mount Pearl North.

PREMIER BALL: Mount Pearl North.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will give him some credit for this because he did go out and accept some of the responsibility for what he said to the media a few days ago. I give him some credit for that, because it is on them. The situation we're into today wasn't created in the last year. Everyone in this province knows that. So you must plan for where you are, Mr. Speaker.

I will also say, and I will challenge Members opposite, for the most part I think Members in this House are good people. They're here for the right reasons, and there's nothing wrong with standing up and accepting responsibility for your actions.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up on a back road in Deer Lake, as most people would know, in a community where people got up early in the morning and went to work in the forestry industry. They came home late in the day. I can remember running and meeting our fathers when they would come home. They accepted responsibility. So if there's anything they taught us it is accept responsibility for your actions, Mr. Speaker. Accept it. There's nothing wrong in that. People will admire that.

We haven't been perfect. I know that, but we were left with a nuclear bomb, Mr. Speaker, to deal with in this province. We will plan our way out of this because you can do that. You can do that, Mr. Speaker, and we will meet our targets because it's important to do that.

They talked a lot about a legacy fund. They talked a lot about it. There was a lot of talk, but there was no action. No action, Mr. Speaker. They lived, they governed – Mr. Speaker, they lived their lives thinking oil would never go below \$100 a barrel and they are still standing by a plan today that suggests that that would never happen.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, we have a group of people on this side – we are looking forward to implementing some of the things that were in the Speech from the Throne today. We are looking forward to realizing the potential of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are a province with a tremendous amount of assets, Mr. Speaker, a tremendous amount of assets, and we will work with the people in our province. They have seen difficult times in the past but we have come through them as a province, and I will guarantee you now that this province is in better shape today than it was a year ago. And next year, Mr. Speaker, it will be in better shape again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: I'm going to finish up my comments today, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we will have a budget on April 6. I will tell you now, Mr. Speaker, we have a group of people here that will rise to the challenge, but we also see the opportunities that exist in our province, and we will be there to seize those opportunities for the benefit of current Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and future Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I look forward to many more debates standing here in my position as Premier of this province, working with our colleagues right here, Mr. Speaker, making decisions in Cabinet, working with the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, that is the way we will secure our future, and we intend to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It is moved and seconded that a Select Committee be struck to draft the Address of Thanks to be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, in reply to the gracious Speech from the Throne which he was pleased to present to open the present session of the House of Assembly.

The Members of the Select Committee are the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, the Member for Exploits and the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, Bill 2.

I further give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting An Independent Court Of Appeal In The Province, Bill 3.

And further, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act, Bill 4.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, I move the following private Member's resolution, seconded by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to convene a public summit in 2017 to discuss the challenges of inclusive education and constructive solutions with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Faculty of Education of Memorial University, the Newfoundland and

Labrador Federation of School Councils, specialist educators, classroom and subject teachers, instructional resource teachers, student assistants, guidance counsellors, educational psychologists, program specialists for student support services, school administrators, parents, students, advocacy groups for persons with disabilities, other special interest groups, experts on inclusive education practices, legislators representing all parties in the House of Assembly and members of the general public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I notify the House that the private Member's resolution just put to the floor by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island will be the one for Private Members' Day on Wednesday.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, being Wednesday, at 10 a.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.