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*Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA*

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The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Admit strangers.

**Orders of the Day**

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

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

I would ask leave of my colleagues so that we can present the report of the Select Committee.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Does the hon. Government House Leader have leave?

The hon. Government House Leader has leave.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

On behalf of the Select Committee appointed to draft a reply to the speech from His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, I am pleased to present a report of the Select Committee as follows:

To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, the Hon. Frank F. Fagan:

May it please Your Honour, we, the Commons of Newfoundland and Labrador in legislative session assembled, beg to thank Your Honour for the Gracious Speech which Your Honour has addressed to this House.

I move, seconded by the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** When shall the report be received?

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

On motion, report received.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I certainly join in thanking my colleagues for their gratitude to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor for delivering the Speech from the Throne yesterday. Of course it likely will be his last as Lieutenant-Governor, so I'd certainly thank him and his wife for their dedicated service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here this morning after having just attended – the Member for Burin - Grand Bank and I took the opportunity to attend the public information sessions surrounding the environmental impact statement surrounding the Grieg project, which will affect the Burin Peninsula, the Placentia Bay region.

The Member for St. John's Centre was there as well. Though I note her many concerns that she just raised on *Open Line* went unanswered last night because she didn't raise not once – not once did the Member for St. John's Centre stand at a public information session that was designed to provide answers and raise concerns to the questions posed, not once did the Member for St. John's Centre stand – and the Member for Grand Bank can attest to this – not once did she stand to ask a question.

I just heard the Member on *Open Line* against the project and against jobs on the Burin Peninsula. And I'm standing here this morning to defend the people that I represent and defend the people who are seeking employment and jobs. It's absolutely reprehensible that with no knowledge, the Member for St. John's Centre would use *Open Line* and other mediums to pander for her leadership campaign at the expense of the people of the Burin Peninsula. I simply will not allow it.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** The people of the Burin Peninsula and of Placentia Bay deserve better than pandering to the people of Downtown St. John's, I say to the Member opposite.

This is a project that has gone through rigorous environmental review, Mr. Speaker. All the people of the Burin Peninsula are asking for is that it be set to the same guidelines, the same standards as every other aquaculture development in this province. That is all the people of the Burin Peninsula are asking for. But the Members opposite, they want to delay and delay and delay. I shall not allow it. We will go through the proper procedures, the environmental guidelines, but we will not allow the Member for St. John's Centre to try and delay an economic development project that has proven to be sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, they're over there laughing. Well, I can guarantee you, the people of the Burin Peninsula aren't laughing after hearing the comments from the Member for St. John's Centre this morning.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I recognize the hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Point of order under section 49 of our Standing Orders, Mr. Speaker. I consider –

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** I consider the comments that are being made by the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue concerning the Member for St. John's Centre very offensive – extremely offensive. She is a professional in this House; she is doing her work professionally.

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** Everybody in this House speaks to issues outside of this House in media. I

find the term “pandering,” I find all the things that's just been said offensive to the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** This is not a point or order, plain and simple.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** Mr. Speaker, could I have your ruling, please, and not that of the House Leader?

**MR. SPEAKER:** I regret that I did not hear the comments. I have two options: One is I can recess and review the comments or I can look to the Member for a response.

I'm not seeing any response. I could offer a recess. I'm sorry; I did not hear the comments in question.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

**MS. MICHAEL:** You don't have to recess at this moment. I would be asking the Speaker to take time, maybe during the break in between today, to find out what was said.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Sounds like a reasonable suggestion. Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, I encourage you to review all comments that I ever made here in the public record this morning. The truth can hurt, I say to the Member opposite.

The people of the Burin Peninsula deserve better than Members of this Legislature grandstanding on issues without knowing the facts.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** In fact, Mr. Speaker, comments were made about land-based aquaculture which, to my knowledge, in the depths of research that I have made, unlike the Members opposite, it has never been economically viable. If it was economically viable, why would you put it in Newfoundland and Labrador? Why not put it adjacent to the markets?

Why would you add transportation costs, labour costs and everything else that would be associated with putting it on land here? Why would you add that? That makes no sense, Mr. Speaker, and it was pointed out on *Open Line* this morning that it made no sense.

We welcome oversight. We must welcome it. Our environment must be protected, Mr. Speaker. It's paramount to any project that environmental sustainability be addressed, but this project has undergone every environmental scrutiny that every other aquaculture project in the province has undergone.

Along with the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, with the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, we took an opportunity last fall to tour aquaculture sites in the Coast of Bays region. The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune I'm sure can stand at some point here today or tomorrow to expand on the opportunities it has provided to rural communities.

We are trying to survive. We want a future for young people in rural Newfoundland, and you stood yesterday pontificating on young people leaving this province. As one of them, I'm asking, stop using us as your pawn.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** We want a future in this province. We want to stay, we want to work, we want families to be raised here. If aquaculture can assist the people of the Burin Peninsula and Placentia Bay in doing so, we will support that Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** The future of rural communities is far different, I say, than downtown St. John's, or St. John's Centre for that matter, Mr. Speaker, and we must protect all communities in our province. If there are economic development opportunities, we must have them in our communities.

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

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

**MR. BROWNE:** We hear the Members opposite always, always being negative. I have here, Mr. Speaker, a petition of some 1,700 names.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How many?

**MR. BROWNE:** 1,700 people have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, in support of the Grieg project on the Burin Peninsula – 1,700 people.

I heard the Member for St. John's Centre raise a concern, what she called a concern with respect to last night's session, that it was merely two hours to address the issues. She also indicated there were a number of people there who wanted to discuss. Well in the room I was in last night – apart from the Member for Burin - Grand Bank and I – I believe everyone else, including the Member for St. John's Centre, had their mind made up against this project and against the people of the Burin Peninsula and Placentia Bay.

We see the world's largest hatchery is to be constructed in Marystown with processing to be done in St. Lawrence, rejuvenating a plant that has been struggling under the current species that it's operating under now. Mr. Speaker, this is a story worth telling, but the Member for St. John's Centre doesn't want it to be told.

Mr. Speaker, I have a responsibility to those who elected me to stand up for them and to help promote the creation of jobs that are sustainable to both the economy and the environment, and on both bills, on both aspects the people of the Burin Peninsula say it fits the bill. They support the Grieg project, Mr. Speaker, but we are not against environmental review. I would be the first to say it must undergo an environmental review, but it has through both provincial and federal agencies. It's important to note that.

If you listened to *Open Line* this morning, Mr. Speaker, you would think that no environmental review has taken place. You would think the only environmental review was two hours last night at a session that spanned the province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to correct the record. That is not true. It is not true. There have been so many consultations that we have attended, the Member for Burin - Grand Bank and I, that I've not seen Members of the Third Party attend. The sudden interest, Mr. Speaker, it is striking and sudden. There are so many –

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

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, if the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi wants to heckle me, that's fine. I can take it, because the people of the Burin Peninsula want me to stand up for their rights and their jobs.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Speech from the Throne yesterday and we heard about the government's plans moving forward. The only positive out of it that the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi could find was a recognition of athletes, and on that point we will agree. We will agree that Kaetlyn Osmond, Liam Hickey and Brad Gushue, and these athletes are so deserving of our recognition, but the Member opposite said that was the only point she could be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

The highest non-resident and resident spending and visitation in this province is not worth celebrating? Investments in film and highlighting the contributions to GDP, that is not worth celebrating? The efforts we are making toward regional development in terms of broadband and connectivity, this not worth celebrating? I have a real issue with the negative rhetoric coming out of the Opposition benches.

There is no doubt, there's a job to be done by Members of the government side and Members of the Opposition side. It is the Opposition's job to hold government to account. I respect that, but when all the fear mongering comes forward and the rhetoric that is so blatantly negative and

politically motivated, Mr. Speaker, it upsets me. It upsets my constituents because we want positivity. We want projects to move forward like the selling of the Marystown Shipyard, like the redevelopment of Bull Arm, like the Grieg project. These are all projects that are worth doing.

The Member for Burin - Grand Bank and I worked so hard on the Canada Fluorspar mine, something that hung around the former administration for over a decade, Mr. Speaker. They had the big ribbon cutting down there in 2011 with the former premier and their Cabinet.

**MS. HALEY:** Four times.

**MR. BROWNE:** Four times I'm told, Mr. Speaker, by the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

What happened? Nothing. This government got in on a Treasury, Mr. Speaker, with so little left. We took it over the line, a \$17 million repayable loan and we have hundreds of people working in St. Lawrence. That is a success story.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** We hear the comments again; I have to go back to the comments surrounding young people leaving the province, Mr. Speaker. I am here and so many others are here.

If you watched CBC last night you would have seen a young gentleman from Marystown – his 22nd birthday was yesterday – attending the information session last night. Do you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? What would have been the greatest birthday gift that he could receive was an approval for the Grieg project to proceed so that he can get a job and stay at home in Marystown.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Not everyone wants to leave. At some point, Mr. Speaker, if the Opposition is so set on saying young people are leaving, you're going to have to take responsibility that your rhetoric is driving them away.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** The young people of this province want hope, they want aspirations. They want a future to look forward to, Mr. Speaker, not negativity, doom and gloom. That's all we heard yesterday.

When I heard the Member for St. John's Centre on *Open Line* this morning degrading this project and the process involved – when it is standard for all projects, it is outlined in the act, Mr. Speaker, it has followed every request that's been made of it – then I have a duty to the people who elected me to stand in this Chamber, to stand in my place and defend their prospects for jobs, Mr. Speaker.

That is my role as their MHA and I won't shirk from that. I won't pander for the sake of any kind of leadership campaign. I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker.

I have 1,700 names, Mr. Speaker, on this petition that all support the project. I'm sure that will all be considered when it goes in for its environmental review. I welcome it. All oversight should be welcomed. But at some point you have to stop and you have to say is it positive or not and make your decision. At some point you have to stop sitting on the fence; you have to make a decision. I can stand unequivocally to say that I support this project. I support the prospect of jobs for the people on the Burin Peninsula. I will work, despite the negativity and despite your efforts to constrain said jobs, this government, in partnership with the Member for Burin - Grand Bank and our entire Premier and Cabinet, we will work to support the people of the Burin Peninsula in a way that was not there after the promise of 400 to 500 year-round jobs at the Marystown fish plant, when FPI was sold in 2007.

Do you know what it is now? A heap of rubble – a heap or rubble. We asked for support; we pleaded for support. The PC government at the time would not respond, and the plant that was once the gold star of the FPI crown is now a heap of rubble. Go up the road to Burin, Mr. Speaker, the only secondary processing plant in this province, it is closed today. It was closed on their watch. So I'm not going to take lessons on the fishery on the Burin Peninsula from Members opposite. And I certainly won't be taking future lessons from the Members of the

Third Party, because we will support sustainable economic development in this province.

We will do so, Mr. Speaker – we won't be handing \$45 million out the door on the back of a napkin, I can guarantee you of that. Any kind of deal that we put together in support of any kind of project will have milestones and check marks to ensure the people of the province see the full benefit of the investments being made, I can tell you that right now, Mr. Speaker.

We have so much on the horizon, whether it's the sale of the Marystown Shipyard; the living quarters being built at Cow Head in Kiewit; the Husky Project being built just across the bay in Argentia; the prospect of a port cluster for Bull Arm to support Jean d'Arc and Bay du Nord and the future prospects in our oil and gas sector as we work to double production by 2030. There are good things on the horizon.

I will say again, Mr. Speaker, that as leaders of this province, as the 40 people, no matter the party, no matter what side we sit on, we each have a responsibility to the people of this province to promote unity and to promote positive messaging in the face of adversity. Because if we don't have confidence in the future, if we hear Members opposite promoting such doom and gloom, how can we expect the young people or any people of our province to have confidence in the future? We need confidence from elected leaders. People look to us to discuss the future, Mr. Speaker, and see where this this province is going.

We face challenges; there's no doubt about that. I would never deny we face challenges. We were left with nearly a bankrupt Treasury, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier updated the House yesterday, thanks to his actions, his Cabinet's actions, his caucus's actions, we will not be going bankrupt, despite what the Members of the Opposition tried to do while they were in government and the massive overspending despite warnings from the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to take a measured approach. We are going to take an approach that works for the people of the province that works for the people of the Burin Peninsula. Just as we did with CFI in St. Lawrence – and we cut the ribbon on that last year for the final time because

now it's operational and in construction phases, Mr. Speaker. We had a job to find a piece of ribbon, it was that cut up. But the job was done. The people of St. Lawrence, the people of the Burin Peninsula, are getting back to work.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** And that is our vision; that is what we want to do.

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

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

**MR. BROWNE:** I would say to the Member for St. John's Centre, come to the Burin Peninsula, have a public meeting, raise your concerns and hear from the people who you are out talking about. We will attend, I will attend, Mr. Speaker, and I will listen to the concerns raised, but I want the entire public of the Burin Peninsula invited and each of the 1,700 names on this list, I want an invitation to go to each of them.

I say to the Member opposite, I'm not afraid to debate these issues. We will do it and we will do it in a way that is prudent to protect the environment, the economy and sustain jobs in rural Newfoundland. Our young people, Mr. Speaker, a memo to the Opposition: We have no intentions of going anywhere. This is our home, it's our place, it's where our families are, where we will raise our own families, and I am proud to call myself a Newfoundlander and Labradorian and I'm not going anywhere.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

It is indeed a pleasure to get up here on a Wednesday morning and talk to Address in Reply, and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, like I always say that I do.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to thank His Honour Frank Fagan and his wife for the address yesterday and the reading of the Throne Speech. Mr. Fagan and his wife – I'm not sure whether they'll be here for the next Throne speech, but on behalf of everyone in my district, and I'm sure everyone in Newfoundland, I really respect the two individuals. They did a fantastic job in their term and represented the province very, very well; very nice people and great people in the province. They did a fantastic job.

Like I said, I don't know how long their term will last, but on behalf of myself, and I'm sure everybody over here and everybody in this House of Assembly, we want to really show them the thanks that they deserve for the great job that they did. It will be five years this month, so it's a fantastic job.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I get on to talk about what I need to talk about, I have to address the former Member who just got up here and spoke. I don't know if it was a great speech because always in this House I always want to go to the point with respect for others. We have to respect everybody's opinion and we have to show respect to each other in this House of Assembly.

It really gets to me when we try to put one part of Newfoundland against another, where we try to put one province against another, people against each other. When he gets up and says about the Burin Peninsula and people in Downtown St. John's, that really irks me because I'm sure there are people in Downtown St. John's that supports his opinion, while there may be people on the Burin Peninsula may support somebody else's opinion.

Why do we do it all the time? Why do we go and try to divide one section of this province with another section of the province? Everybody has a right to express their opinion. They have a right to go to a public meeting and express their opinion. They have a right to stand up here in the House of Assembly and express their opinion. They have a right to get on *Open Line* and express their opinion. But don't go out and try to put one part against another. The Burin Peninsula against Downtown St. John's was his comments twice.

I really take offence to that, I really do, because as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, whether it's in Labrador or it's on the Island, we should support each other. Now, we'll all have a difference of opinion, I'm sure we will. I'm sure myself and the Members from Labrador will have differences of opinions sometimes, but I hope that there are a lot of times I'll get up here and support you guys because we all need to work together.

I go to a lot of meetings with different organizations in my district and the one thing I tell them all the time: Listen, we'll all have a difference of opinion, but we all have to work together for what's best for Newfoundland and Labrador. And that's what we're here for. People should realize that. Don't be putting one part of the province against another part. Don't be putting individual groups against another group. Let's work together. Let's see what the best is for our people. That's what we're here to do.

I'm here today to talk about the Throne Speech. I read the Throne Speech yesterday before I came in here and I listened to His Honour address it yesterday. There are things in this Throne Speech I think are great, I think are fantastic. I really do believe it.

There are some things in this Throne Speech that I'm going to question today, but I want to work with government. I want to work with the people on the other side. I want to work with industry. I want to work with educators. I want to work with municipalities to make our province the best it can be.

We can't be putting one part of the province against another part of the province. The Burin Peninsula against Downtown St. John's is wrong. It's wrong to get up here and even suggest it in this House of Assembly. We're all here; there are only 500,000 of us. We're a small province. We are vast regions.

I can remember going to school at Gonzaga and at one time it was a big issue, I tell you. That was in the '70s, I'm telling my age. It was a big divide, the baymen and the townies. I was in Flatrock 16 kilometres outside of St. John's and I was a baymen and very proud of it.

When I went to St. John's, I made a point to get along with my friends, to try to work together. That's what this has to do. But when you see a Member getting up here and doing what that Member just did, that is completely, completely wrong. We shouldn't be doing it; we should be working together no matter what part of the province you're from. I am sure there are people in Downtown St. John's that will support that Member's point of view, while there are people in the Burin Peninsula who will support that Member's point of view.

We're all entitled. We live in a country – freedom of speech, freedom to be able to express ourselves. That's why we live in the greatest province in the world, in the greatest country in the world. That's why we are having the opportunity and should take the privilege of what we have today to be able to express our views.

I just wanted to get on to that first. I'm sorry if I ranted a little bit, but I really wanted to because that irks me. It really gets to me; it really, really, really irks me.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about something good in the Throne Speech yesterday. We talked about women's issues. I know the minister responsible for women's affairs was recently in New York. I saw some things she made. Do you know what? As a part of the House of Assembly, we cannot tolerate – cannot tolerate – violence against women and young girls. We cannot do it.

When I read this yesterday that 50 per cent of women and young girls over the age of 15 – 50 per cent will face either sexual or physical abuse. That's wrong. Let's work together and make sure we correct it. That's what I like about the Throne Speech.

I know the minister brought in about harassment – the first bill is going to be about that and I know the other Members over there. Let's work together and make sure we stop this. This is important. This is important to fathers. It's not only important to our children, it's important to our families. I have a granddaughter now and I really don't want her to be in the 50 per cent. I really don't want her to be in it. So this is a good thing.



I agree with government. Let's get together and let's do what we can to make that we get that down; 50 per cent is not tolerable. We cannot have a society – society is really changing, as we look at #MeToo campaign and everything else. People are speaking out today and for too long, people didn't speak out, but we need to address it here in the House of Assembly. We need to address it in our homes. We need to address it in our province. I support government on anything they'll do to reduce this. This is very important to our society. I want to work with government on that.

In the Throne Speech we talked about different things. We talk about our fiscal situation. Listen, there's nobody in this House of Assembly – we realize the fiscal situation we're in. We do realize it. I talk to families; I go to all the functions in my district. I talk to my neighbours. I'm around the block. But do you know what? We have a lot of people hurting in this province. We have a whole lot of people who are finding it very, very difficult.

We have to improve the economic situation we have in the province, but we have to improve people's lives too. The 2016 budget, I have to go back to the budget. I know government was faced with a fiscal situation, but we can't put in on the backs of the people of this province. We just can't do it anymore.

Today, I have a private Member's motion coming in and I'm hoping I'll get support on the other side. I probably won't, but I really believe it's important because just speaking to people in my district, people are hurting. People are really struggling.

When people don't have the money to spend on simple things, it really hurts our economy. I spoke last week to the taxi industry. I met with them twice last week and they're really finding it difficult. We saw they had a meeting with the minister. Hopefully, things will be done; the things they're asking for will come true.

They're like every other small business in this province. Small businesses are really finding it difficult. They are finding it hard because we don't have the income. The money is not there. People are not spending money. When people don't have money to spend, they can't spend it.

What that does is it hurts everybody. It hurts our local stores. It hurts our restaurants. It hurts the taxi industry. It hurts a lot of people.

We have to change our attitude. We just have to change what we're doing and realize that the taxes and the levies and everything else that we're after bringing in over the year – we pay this highest gas in all of Canada here now. People are wondering: Why would you live here? I'm not a doom and gloom – I'm not going anywhere and I always mention about my family

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** – and I tell you one thing I want them to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador. I want every young person to stay here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I want opportunities for young people here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to see people here in Newfoundland and Labrador work. I want to see our population grow. When people can't afford to live here, it's a reason to move away.

Mr. Speaker, I know they talked about innovation and business development, but it all starts at home here. I believe in investing in our local businesses. I'll make a point myself – and I hope all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do – to support our own. It's very important. No matter if it's the guy who's selling the vegetables on the side of the road or it's a local craft shop Downtown, or it's a local craft shop in Bonavista or a local craft shop in Corner Brook, we have to make sure that people in this province really support our own because that keeps jobs here. It keeps people working. Local is very, very important.

Mr. Speaker, we speak of our culture. We talk about culture in our province. To me, honestly, I love travelling this province. I love travelling to different areas of the province. If I had a choice to go to my moose hunting trip up in Millertown or go to the Dominican, I'm gone to Millertown because I just like what we have here. I like talking to the people.

A couple of guides that are up there, that's what they do for their livelihood and it's interesting to see their perspective on life and how working off the land and the way it is, but it's who we are as people. It's our culture. It's who we are. That's what makes us attractive. People love to come here because have great, great things to see and everything else. But the number one thing we have in our province is our people. Our people are what bring people here. Granted, they like to see the nice scenery, the homes, the icebergs and everything else but what people come for in Newfoundland and Labrador are the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that I like is the comments on Labrador in our Throne Speech. I texted the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair because I had the opportunity for the first time to go Red Bay this year. I have to say it was absolutely beautiful. It was amazing just to see the boat and what was down underneath. I went to the tour and they explained how they used to bring over all the red rocks and drop down –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** In Red Bay?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** It was in Red Bay, yeah. It was absolutely beautiful.

Do you know what? The two people that were there, I mentioned that I knew the minister and they –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** You should have said that we were friends.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yeah, I told them we were friends. I mentioned that I knew her. They spoke very highly of you and said you were there. I said: Oh no, she's a good lady. I also mentioned that I knew the former Member that was a good friend of mine also.

It was a great visit to Labrador. It was the first time ever in that part of Labrador. I've been in Goose Bay, I've been in Happy Valley and I've been in Lab City, but it was very nice. Granted, the day was foggy but Labrador has so much to offer.

We have to put the investments in 100 per cent. I mean our government started off the roadwork in Labrador with the Trans-Labrador Highway.

We invested heavily in the Trans-Labrador Highway and this government over here is continuing to do it in your district, in other districts, Mr. Speaker. That's a good thing. That's not a bad thing. That's great. That's a huge part of our province.

Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech there's tourism. I know the minister gets up all the time and touts tourism. He says: What a great job, we're at \$1.6 billion this year. I have to remind the minister, the tourism ads and the things we see on TV didn't start two years ago. They started over a number of years. The tourism industry is like any other industry, it starts low and hopefully you keep building and building and show things we have to offer.

I really do hope that by 2020 we do get to that \$1.6 billion. I can remember getting to the billion part, now we're looking at in 2020 – because we have a great product. Whenever you talk about tourism you have to talk about the product that you offer. The product that we have to offer is beautiful land, a beautiful province and beautiful people. We can sell it because all you have to do is look at the ads.

I think just a few more ads. I suggest to the minister, come down to the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and take a few pictures because there's some great scenery down there also. Just hike the trails.

Just look at the East Coast Trail.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Lots of berries there.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Lots of berries down there, yeah. If you look at the East Coast Trail, the investments over the years are amazing. When you walk the trail, it's amazing the people that you meet there. People from all over the world come here just because of the East Coast Trail.

Mr. Speaker, I think tourism will grow. I think it was huge investments by our government, and the government continuing. It's a good thing. It's a great thing.

Mr. Speaker, one part of the Throne Speech – and I'm just going through it, I can stay here all day and talk about it actually – is immigration. It's important that we show our province and

want people who want to come here. I mean honestly – and it's not doom and gloom, it's not doom and gloom at all – but honestly, we have to make changes for people who want to come here.

I know government just put out I think \$22,000 to see why the ex-patriots are not coming here anymore. I could have told you. I could tell you why they're not coming here. It costs too much to live here. Our taxes are too high. Our taxes are way too high. That's the reason why people are not coming here.

I'll tell you, the first thing, if we do smart things and reduce our taxes and make it more affordable for people, immigrants will come here, but we also have to work on people in our province to stay here. We really have to make sure we work on our own. We have too many people. I know a young family in my district – I spoke to the guy a month ago. He worked on a couple of megaprojects over the years. He said: Kevin, you know what – he was in Fort McMurray for a number of years and now he's gone back to Alberta again. A young family, two children, left our province because he said I just can't afford to live there anymore. And that's the sad part of it.

So we talk about immigration. We have to make it attractive for people to live here. We really have to make it attractive for people to live here. We have to make sure we do things to make sure that the people are young people who want to stay here; are educated young people. We have the best education system in Canada. People can afford to go and get a good education here, and that's a good thing. That's a real good thing, but we need to work on making sure they stay here.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a couple of minutes left on the Throne Speech, and I really want to talk about the fishery. I know when we look at our fishery today, and sometimes you'll look at it, it's just after changing so much.

The very first job I ever had was when I was 13 years old driving along in a fish truck, writing out slips and weighing codfish. That was the first job I ever had. My father was a fisherman. My brother is a fisherman now. My son goes at it. It's just such a big change in our fishery.

Our fishery was everything to rural Newfoundland. It was good to St. John's and areas like that too. I used to go over and haul fish off the Critch's and the Hancock's and all the boys over on the Southside. The fishery in St. John's was huge because it was based on the cod fishery, but today our fishery has changed.

We really need to make sure we support our fisherpeople, our harvesters on the water. There are regulations out there right now that I get up in the House of Assembly and talk about all the time. It's about safety for harvesters that go on the water, about vessel size. Do you know we have absolutely no say in our fishery?

I put a motion here a little while ago about joint management, and everybody in this House of Assembly got up and supported it. Yes, we need to work on joint management for our fishery. I don't know what's on the go with joint management anymore. Do you know what? It's what's happening in our fishery. We talk about our people, our resources and everything else without any say in it.

Mr. Speaker, no matter what side of the House you're on, whether you're in rural Newfoundland or in downtown St. John's, our fishery is the backbone of our society. Our fishery is what brought people to Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to work hard. We need to work together to make sure our fishery stays the way it is. It can. It's after changing from cod to a shell fishery. Crab is a huge fishery in the province. If you ask some harvesters in this province, they'd probably tell you they don't want to go back to the cod. They would rather stay at the crab, because it's more lucrative for one thing.

Just in closing, I think that in our province we need to make some changes. We need government to look at what's happening to the people in our province. We need government to stand up and give people the opportunity to stay here. We need to reduce taxes in this province.

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. It certainly is always a pleasure to stand and speak and to express what we really feel. I think it's important that all of us do that.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to acknowledge His Honours yesterday and the Speech from the Throne, which was very well done. I've known both His Honour and Her Honour for quite some time, and it's always a pleasure to see them and have them in our presence.

Today, I'm really responding to some type of pontification that always happens on the opposite side when it comes to numbers. I learned a long time ago that stats and numbers are whatever you want to interpret it. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Members on the opposite side always look at the doom and gloom. If they would listen, as I go through this process, they might learn something about what the real facts are.

I make reference to my hon. critic last week – I think it was Thursday – who talked about a bounce in the steps of people. The bounce is gone. There's no bounce anymore. Well, I want to tell the hon. Member that there's probably not a lot of bounce back in the years when they were in power –

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

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** When you go to the gas pumps and it was \$1.48 for a litre of gas, there wasn't a lot of bounce in his steps then. You'd swear, Mr. Speaker, you were living in a land of milk and honey, when everything was flowing. The land of paradise, when everything was happening and there was nothing in this world that could have come tumbling down, except the \$2.7 billion deficit.

The hon. Member gets up and says: We have 300 new fees. No, it's not 300 new fees, Mr. Speaker. Most of those fees were put in place by the Opposition. There were some –

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

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** There were some increases in fees, yes, there were but some of them hadn't changed in about 40 years. So when you get up and make that statement, the general public has a tendency to feel: Wow, there were 300 new fees? No, there weren't.

If the Member opposite would take his time to make some reference – he got up yesterday or on Thursday and talked about increases in taxes; nobody is staying here because the taxes are too high. Mr. Speaker, 20 minutes last night – and I'll read them slowly. Twenty minutes last night – and I found out where Newfoundland and Labrador is after the increase in 2016 with personal income tax.

Here are the numbers and if he doesn't want to write them down he can have my four little pieces of sheet afterwards. New Brunswick: the first \$41,675, 9.68 per cent; New Brunswick: \$41,674 to \$83,351, 14.82 per cent; \$83,351 to \$135,510, 16.52 per cent; \$135,000 to \$154,382, 17.84 per cent; over \$154,000, 20.3 per cent. New Brunswick – maybe that's where some of our people went.

Nova Scotia: less than \$29,590, 8.79 per cent; \$29,590 to \$59,180, 14.95 per cent; \$59,180 to \$93,000, 16.67 per cent; \$93,000 to \$150,000, 17.50 per cent; over \$150,000, 21 per cent. PEI – probably a little competitive of PEI, they only have three categories, Mr. Speaker. Under \$31,984, 9.8 per cent; \$31,984 to \$63,969, 13.8 per cent; over \$63,000, 16.7 per cent – and our bad Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, where taxes are so high that everybody is leaving the province, everybody is going away because they can't afford to pay the taxes in Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland and Labrador: first \$35,851, 8.7 per cent, the lowest, the lowest – for the third time, the lowest in Atlantic Canada; \$35,851 to \$71,701, 14.5 per cent, the lowest in Atlantic Canada; \$71,701 to \$128,010, 15.8 per cent, lowest in Atlantic Canada; \$128,010 to \$179,214, 17.3 per cent; over \$179,214, 18.3 per cent.

That, Mr. Speaker, is with the humungous increase that killed this province in 2016. When

the Members opposite talk about personal income tax and people are leaving because of taxes, those are the facts, Mr. Speaker, and that's not happening.

Another comment, Mr. Speaker, I've got to bring this to attention. The hon. the Leader of the Opposition got up yesterday and talked about people are leaving by the droves, and I think my hon. critic last year talked about they're leaving in the thousands – they're leaving in the thousands. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something. In 2012, the glory years, the glory years when everything was flowing with milk and honey, we were living in the land of paradise and nothing could happen: 2012, 7,628 people left this province; in 2013, another year of milk and honey, 6,788. In 2014, 6,760 left the province; 2015, 6,851.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I need to get to the year when we had such a very, very difficult year and a different budget, when people were leaving by the thousands. In 2016, 6,368 people left the province. I have to tell the hon. Members opposite, if they want to listen, in 2017, there were 70 more people left this province; 70 more than when we had milk and honey flowing, in the land of paradise, when we had all things going for us. We had 70 more people leave in 2017 than 2012. These are the numbers. They don't lie; 70 more people, when according to the Members opposite, when the doom and gloom was happening, I ask the hon. Members: What happened in 2012? We can go on, Mr. Speaker.

I can also bring to light, when you want to talk a bounce in your step, I would have invited the hon. Member and critic to come to Grand Falls-Windsor when in 2008 and 2009, the paper mill closed. Not a lot of bounce in the steps of people when the paper mill closed – devastation. My hon. Member talked about the fish plant in Marystown is rusting out. Well, I'll you what, there is no infrastructure left from the paper mill in Grand Falls-Windsor. It's gone.

Mr. Speaker, when people get up and pontificate on the fact that there's doom and gloom in this province and everybody is leaving the province, that's not true. That is not what I would consider to be a positive step or a positive message because we are making a difference. A lot of times when you go through a period of time

when you did not have to plan, when you did not need a vision, when \$25 billion in royalties was coming in and you never really had to put a strategic plan in place, that's what happens. You end up with a \$2.7 billion deficit and, Mr. Speaker, that is an unfortunate situation. We are dealing with those situations by strategically planning for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reference one other point – maybe a couple of other points. I want to talk about what the previous government proposed for Grand Falls-Windsor when it comes to long-term care facilities. If I remember correctly I was mayor at the time, when the huge announcement was made that they were going to do a long-term care facility for an aging demographic and an aging population in the largest centre in Central Newfoundland, 50 beds. Fifty beds, that's the vision they had. An aging demographic, the largest central community centre and you're going to do 50 beds.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How many?

**MR. HAWKINS:** Fifty beds.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was not acceptable to me. It wasn't acceptable to me as a mayor at the time and was not acceptable to me as an MHA. To be quite frank, as well, not only did their model have only 50 beds, their model had it would be provided by the private sector – services by the private sector. That was not a model that we had.

Immediately upon election, I started talking with my good friend, the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** A great guy who has a tremendous knowledge of the health care in this province. We sat, we talked, we discussed and we looked at a model that works. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? We have now made a sensible announcement.

For the people of Grand Falls-Windsor and surrounding area, we're not going to be getting 50 beds which was totally inadequate. What are we getting? We're getting a long-term care facility that's going to provide 60 beds. In

addition to that, the services will be provided by the public sector.

It doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, we have 20 protective care units that are going to be going in Botwood. When I look at Botwood and Grand Falls-Windsor, it's about a 20-minute drive distance. Really, that is within any large centre, really you're in the same community.

A lot of times if you go to other parts of the world, a community is sometimes defined by your water supply. Well, the water supply in Grand Falls-Windsor provides Bishop's Falls, Botwood, Peterview, Northern Arm. If that's a supply, that's a community.

We have 20 additional protective care units that will be going in Botwood, and the Botwood Hugh Twomey Centre is providing a tremendous service to the people in the area. Mr. Speaker, I know first-hand because my mother-in-law is currently at the Hugh Twomey Centre with Alzheimer's, and the level of care and the professionalism that's provided in that facility is second to none.

Mr. Speaker, the addition of 20 protective care units for Botwood, now we're up to 80. We were going to have 50, now we're up to 80.

One of the other areas we've been having close discussions with my hon. colleague is with regard to the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor. Hats off to the chair, Mr. Bradley and Sandra Evans for the tremendous amount of work they're doing. They're trying to set up a community hospice. What will happen there, they're looking at 10 palliative care units. We as a government, we're looking at the model and looking at how in fact that can fit into our long-term plan for the region.

Mr. Speaker, once that's operational, we have now increased service in Central Newfoundland from what would have been 50 long-term care beds to now a potential for 90, almost doubling. Our government has almost doubled the potential, whereas before the status quo and keeping 50 would have been adequate.

Mr. Speaker, when I sit as a Member on the government side, I'm usually fairly quiet when it

comes to – I'm not really into the heckling sort of thing, but sometimes sitting back and listening to some of the verbiage that comes forth without putting real facts on the line – because, Mr. Speaker, quite often we could really take the message that we want put out there and twist it, and twist it whichever way we want it, but I think it's important for us to put the facts out there, to put the numbers out there.

We know, Mr. Speaker, there are challenges. We know we have an aging demographic. We know we have less number of kids coming out of our schools. We know there are challenges for enrolment, whether it's Memorial University, whether it's the College of the North Atlantic, whether it's the private training institutions. We know we have challenges.

So it's important for us to plan, to strategically plan, to put a vision in place, and that's part of what we're doing with *The Way Forward*. Not only are we just saying *The Way Forward* is something that's words on paper, the Premier has been very, very clear that as we move through *The Way Forward* there are benchmarks, there are checks and balances and that in the end we will have a report card.

It's not a matter of just saying we're going to do something, it's an initiative and it just sits there and nobody has to implement it. We have to make sure we are following the vision that is set forth and that we are going to be doing and checking to make sure we have results.

Mr. Speaker, I have gone through three summits, and I mentioned them briefly the other day: the aquaculture, the agriculture and the technology summit. There are tremendous opportunities. There is tremendous potential for our young people. And, yes, immigration is important for us as well. I think we have targeted – and the way in which we're moving forward on our immigration file brings a degree of optimism, because I believe the targets we've set we will be able to meet.

Mr. Speaker, it's important for all of us to embrace the opportunities we have, to embrace the fact that we do have – we are open for business and we are providing opportunities not only for our young people but for our skilled labour and opportunities within the technology

sector for young people to be able to come to Newfoundland and Labrador and to have a productive lifestyle and a productive job.

So, Mr. Speaker, as my time is now running down, again, it's always a pleasure to speak. I'm sure I'll have another opportunity to speak later, but it's important for us and important for all of us – we have a degree of integrity within us to make sure that when we talk about and we put facts out there, that it's just not hearsay. That it's backed up with knowledge, with information and with facts that are accurate and that are correct.

Mr. Speaker, that's important for all of us. The message I want to put out to all of us in Newfoundland and Labrador is that we are open for business. We do have a future and we have a very bright future.

We're going to make sure, as a government, that we will do everything that's possible to make sure that people do have a standard of living in this province that's second to none. People will have pride to be Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, which I am and will continue to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** The hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm very happy to stand and speak this morning for my 20 minutes. I would like to say that last night I did attend the meeting on the Grieg EIS, Environmental Impact Statement. It was a very interesting meeting.

How it was set up is that there was a main session happening in Marystown and then there were three additional satellite sites across the province, excluding Labrador, however. They were in Corner Brook, Gander and St. John's. We were all connected via the Internet. There were some technical difficulties. Unfortunately, we didn't get to hear from Gander and some of

the fine folks who were gathered in Gander who wanted to speak.

Mr. Speaker, I was quite appalled at the vociferous nature and tone of the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue in his attack on me. I think at some point people have to realize that rather than attacking Members, let's attack the problems. I think that would be much more productive and I think that's what we need to do.

I was very happy to be at that meeting. The meeting was two hours. A two-hour meeting sounds pretty substantial; this was two hours for the entire province. The only open public consultation on a huge project, a very significant project that does, Mr. Speaker, provide some opportunity and we'll have to see really how that opportunity rolls out.

I was there for the two hours and I listened. I took copious notes; I have them all here which I would be willing to share with anyone. I listened. I believe that was my role. I did have some questions I would have loved to have asked, but there was no time for that. I listened to the people from across the province who had concerns, not people who are against aquaculture, not at all, but people who had some valid concerns and also some people who had some valid answers as well.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, a huge project that will invest \$45 million of the people's money. That's what was on the table. Whether or not this government is going to commit to that \$45 million, we haven't heard that absolutely yet. The other thing is that this company, which has years of experience in aquaculture, anywhere else in the world they would have to pay licence fees to be able to set up their operations. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador had said that they will not have to pay licence fees to set up here. So there's more than \$45 million of the people's money on table here. This is significant and the people have a right to ask questions and we, as MHAs, must listen and be engaged in that process.

Mr. Speaker, not only was I there for the two hours listening intently, I stayed for an additional hour because there were so many people with additional comments and additional questions who didn't have the opportunity to

speak. So I felt my role, as an MHA, was to listen and to hear what some of those concerns are and to say: All right, where do we need to go? What do we need to do, because this is a big project? Also, it offers the potential of many jobs.

We're not quite sure yet exactly what types of jobs in terms of how many of them will be close to minimum wage, what will some of the salaries be, how many will be in that category, how long will some of the jobs last. We know there will be more jobs in terms of the initial start-up.

Maybe government has that information. We don't really have that information and that's really important to the people of Burin. As a matter of fact, I have family members on the Burin Peninsula who work in the fishery, who work in harvesting and who work in processing and I know how important these jobs are. I have a lot of friends who are in that area as well.

We all know how important those jobs are, so we want to make sure that we get this right because we want sustainable jobs, we want jobs that are good for the economy, we want jobs that are good for the community and we want to make sure that they are jobs that can last, but we also have a few other goals that we need to look at.

It's a very interesting time in the aquaculture industry. Things are changing rapidly. We can see, for instance, what's happening in different parts of the world, but particularly on the Northeast Coast of the United States, where they are in fact doing land-based aquaculture. Now, somebody asked that question at the meeting yesterday and said: How come we're not going to do it land-based? Because again, that seems to be becoming the gold standard. It's safer for the environment. It's safer for the fish themselves, in terms of less pesticides have to be used, less antibiotics have to be used. So it's kind of interesting. The industry is at a time of change, so we're kind of like: Where will our feet be? Will we be using an older method because of our geographic location? It would be very much more expensive to do land-based here; we know that, because of even transporting the feed for the operation.

Somebody asked about this: Why not do land-based here in Newfoundland and Labrador? And the answer was because it wouldn't be economically viable. So we don't know if (a) it wouldn't be economically viable at all, or that Grieg is saying that the profits wouldn't be as high. We don't know. And we know that companies set up to make profits, absolutely. That's the goal of commerce, to make profits, and the by-product is jobs in your local community. I have no problem with that. That's important, because then we know that kind of commercial activity actually creates other commercial activities.

What we need to look at, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to protect all our resources. We need to protect the resources of the fish harvesters who have fished in that area for years. So we have to make sure that those resources are protected. We need to make sure that the health of Placentia Bay will continue; that there will be no damage to Placentia Bay and to our fish harvesters. Then the rollout of that is also, as we've heard the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, the issue of jobs. It's important. We all know that, and we all want to make sure that we seize every possible opportunity we can in a way that's sustainable.

There are a few goals that we should be looking at: to protect the resources of our fish harvesters who have fished in that area for years in our waters; we need to ensure that we have good-paying jobs in rural communities – absolutely – and government needs to hold a higher standard, and government needs policy to protect that.

One of the issues that were raised in the meeting last night, the question was: Would this particular type of operation, the way it is being proposed by Grieg, be allowed to be set up in Norway right now? The scientist for Grieg said: Probably not. The standards in Norway, which is what most of the world is moving towards, are different than the standards in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Someone asked: What standards will this project be under? They will be under the standards of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm not making any of this up, Mr. Speaker, I'm simply reporting back as to what happened at that meeting and the questions that were raised.



We know that our commercial fishery is worth over \$1 billion a year and it provides good jobs to people across Newfoundland and Labrador. We always need to make sure we protect those resources. We must move forward. The science is changing. We must move forward and seize the opportunities that present themselves, but let's make sure that we do it in the most responsible way that we can.

We have to have a government that's committed to meeting all those goals and that will not trade one off for the other. What we have here, Mr. Speaker, is that the people of the province had to go to court to force government to employ every safeguard that we had.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released this huge project from an environmental impact statement. So the Atlantic Salmon Federation and the money from the Atlantic Salmon Federation – a lot of US money, we can't deny that – went to court to force government to insist, to follow all of our democratic safeguards to ensure that this project was done in the most environmentally sustainable way and in the most responsible way, protecting all additional resources for the people of the province. That's the only reason we have an EIS. That is the only reason because this company was released from an EIS.

When we look at what happened with Muskrat Falls, we have our regulatory safeguards to make sure that this project was going well: the Public Utilities Board. That was the regulator who had the legal position of oversight to investigate all aspects of Muskrat Falls to make sure it was environmentally sustainable, financially viable and good for the people of the province. They were stripped of that right and look what happened, look at the boondoggle, even government itself talks about the boondoggle that is Muskrat Falls. The previous administration bypassed the legislated safeguards that were in place, and that's what this government did. This government also released Grieg from an EIS assessment.

Now the people have to go to the courts to make sure that government didn't, once again, bypass every regulatory safeguard and tool at our disposal to make sure that any major project would be under scrutiny, to ensure that it was

good for the province. It shows that government can't be relied upon. People shouldn't have to be working against their government in order for government to employ the safeguards and the legislated safeguards that are in place. We need due diligence, and that's what this is about.

The people of Burin know that as well. There are people in Burin also lobbying for the same thing. I'm would be very happy to meet with people in Burin. I'm not making a decision about whether or not this project goes ahead. The government will make that decision about whether or not this will go ahead, but government must employ all the tools that are at their disposal to ensure that this project is good for the environment, good for jobs, good for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and particularly good for the people on the Burin Peninsula who are relying on this project, who see this project as an opportunity for economic advancement and for jobs, which we all agree is very important.

I would like to now just raise some of the issues, some of the questions that were raised last night. They seem like valid questions and they seem like important questions to me. Again, my role was not to take up time; my role was to listen to the people who had raised concerns. One of the issues that was raised is about the ice in Placentia Bay. Someone raised the issue of ice in Placentia Bay is very, very, very thick. One of the issues that the raised is if these cages had been in the water last April when we saw all that ice in Placentia Bay, and all those cages with 7 million fish, they were damaged and there was an escape of 7 million farmed salmon, which is more than the amount of wild salmon in the world, if there was an escape of 7 million salmon because of the ice that we saw last April in Placentia Bay what would have been –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Fear mongering.

**MS. ROGERS:** It's not fear mongering, Mr. Speaker. This is a question.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, no, no, no, this is not fear mongering. This is a question that was raised. It wasn't you can't do the aquaculture.

The question was raised: What would be the emergency response plan?

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** It's the same in the oil industry, Mr. Speaker. We ask oil companies.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I can hardly hear myself. I listened intently to what they had to say.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** It's not fear mongering. We ask our oil industry what are your emergency plans, should there be an event. So that was the question that was raised, not that you can't put the pens in the water. The question that was raised: What is the emergency response? What would it be? It's a good question, very good question.

Another issue that was brought up is the proximity of Placentia Bay and where the pens would be to the mouth of salmon rivers. Good question. I'm not so sure people were satisfied with the answer. A lot of people feel – so hopefully some of those questions will be answered in the actual EIS.

Another issue that was brought up was the issue of triploids. Now there's been, the Norwegian, the scientists –

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

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

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

The scientist who was there on behalf of Grieg said that they would be using triploids and that there is a 98 per cent sterilization rate of triploids. So someone raised the issue: Well, however, that sounds really good, only 2 per cent possibility of no sterilization. What would happen? So 2 per cent of the triploid process, if there was an escape, that's 140,000 fish, only 2

per cent – that's a lot of fish. What would happen then? That was the question.

The other question that was raised about the triploids is that the scientist said to us – and there were other scientists in the room who were not with Grieg who had questions, and it's really important to hear these questions. If the triploids do well in cold water, but one scientist asked the question: Yeah, the triploids do well in cold water, but what happens in the summer when we have warmer currents, are the triploids going to survive? Are they going to be a valid way of doing this? It hasn't been fully tested. It's still somewhat of a new area for Grieg. Grieg admitted that as well. They're doing due diligence about the sterilization process. They have a whole new sterilization process that they use in a way of sterilizing the eggs.

It's very, very interesting, compressing the eggs through pressure. They said they're doing it in multiple pens rather than a large pen. So they're feeling very confident, but it's still somewhat a new area. He said: What happens then if it's proven after all this work that the triploids may not be absolutely a fool proof way to do it, will they have to result to the diploids? I don't know. Good question.

One question was asked: Can this be done in Norway? I don't think that was adequately answered. People still have outstanding questions that it may not be. Norway may not allow a company to do the exact same kind of project in the waters off Norway.

This is about having respect for our people, Mr. Speaker. To shut down any questions is exactly what happened with Muskrat Falls, and look what we ended up with. We have to hear these valid questions and there has to be a dialogue.

For people to ask questions does not mean they're against and want to shut down aquaculture. It does not mean they're against good jobs in Burin, and the good people of Burin know that too.

One of the issues that was brought up is there has been no peer reviews or documentation presented at any of the presentations last night. We know in science how important that is, to have peer reviews.

There was a report recently out of Scotland where 640,000 dead fish were in the water in aquaculture. People were saying: What happens then? If that happens, what are the remediation processes?

The other issue that was raised was that – Mr. Speaker, I see my time is running out. One of the things is that the Newfoundland and Labrador coalition for agricultural reform has asked for some very specific things, among them is: We have to make sure that we have better regulations, better policies and independent oversight and monitoring. I support that, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Also, we need to see –

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

The hon. Member's –

**MS. ROGERS:** We need to see an independent regulatory body.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. Member's time has expired.

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

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

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

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

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

It's an honour, as it is for everybody here in the House, for me to have opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne which was delivered here yesterday.

Like my colleagues, I want to thank His Honour, Frank Fagan, and Her Honour, Patricia Fagan, for their contribution to the province over the course of their term in that office. It continues to evolve and modernize. We've heard a lot of very complimentary points made about the work that's been done by the Lieutenant-Governor

and his wife since they took that office. I just wanted to say that right off the top.

It is a cause for optimism, the Speech from the Throne yesterday, but there's certainly lots of caution in there. Just briefly, to respond to the previous speaker, I just feel obliged to say a few words about the issue of the Grieg development down in the Burin Peninsula area and Placentia Bay.

I'm from the Burin Peninsula originally; I grew up on a little farm down in Lords Cove. Over the course of the last couple of decades we've really seen a lot of stripping out of the population down there. If people want to talk about population decline, go down to that area of the province and see.

With the recent development of the fluorspar mine reopening – both my grandfathers worked there, my father worked there, a lot of my uncles worked there back in the previous time when that was open. We're all very proud of the fact that we were able to work together to get that mine reopened. The people down in St. Lawrence and the surrounding communities of Lawn, Burin and Marystown are all very proud of the fact that we got that going, with a lot of credit to the ministers and the two MHAs for the area.

The Grieg development is another piece of the puzzle to make sure that we have long-term population and economic stability on the Burin Peninsula. I hear a lot of talk about people leaving and people leaving. I left the province a number of times in my youth and I came back.

I want my son, who will be seven this year, to have the choice to live in Newfoundland and Labrador, if he chooses. If he wants to go away to work, that will be his decision, like all of the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from this part of the province who left and worked in Labrador years ago and all the people from this province, before we joined Confederation, that used to go to Boston and New York and built large portions of those cities. Their infrastructure was built by hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

After we joined Confederation, lots of our families relocated and worked on the Mainland.

My father's first job after he graduated high school was he went to London, Ontario in 1968 to work for Labatt's Brewery, but he died at his home on the Burin Peninsula because he came back.

Sometimes we migrate out for work, but we often come back. Everybody knows that saying about the Newfoundlander in Heaven is the only person who wants to go home. I hold that true. I think we're all patriots here in the House of Assembly and we want what's best for the province.

I won't get into the specifics of what the Member had to say, all I'll say, Mr. Speaker, is there's something very fishy about what it was she had to say about that project.

I also wanted to point out, Mr. Speaker, today the Conference Board of Canada is sounding that we have a very, very positive economic outlook for the City of St. John's for 2018. That is again something that is happening because we are all working together, working on all cylinders – municipal government, provincial government, federal government, and sometimes the Opposition – working together to get this province back on track again, and we are getting there. We are getting there, I assure you.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Now, I wanted to say a few things about child care, because when we had the by-election in Mount Pearl North that was an issue that was talked about by, I guess, all of the parties who were running in that election.

I just wanted to talk about where we are, because someone said recently to me, you don't hear about the good things. All you hear is the negativity. Anything that's positive is drowned out by this tide of negativity. I just wanted to tell you, we are living in a transformational moment in education in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are living in a transformational moment, and I'll tell you why.

Last year when we were facing great financial difficulty, we worked with the former minister of Finance, the ministers of all the departments, with the Premier, and we realized that even facing great financial difficulty, we had to invest

in early learning and child care. So we put funds towards reducing the threshold by which parents can qualify for subsidized child care, and that had not been changed since 2007. Ten years, a decade went by without a change to the affordability of child care in this province.

I say that the hon. Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour talked about this fictional time that the Opposition parties talk about, somehow when we had everything and everything was great and was fine, even then the Progressive Conservative government of this province did not see fit to change that threshold of eligibility for the child care subsidy. We did it twice last year. We did it the first time as a result of the provincial budget and then we did it again as a result of the federal contribution to child care, which I'll go into some detail about.

Last year, we also changed the supplement, which is a wage supplement, to early childhood educators. Some early childhood educators – and this was a platform promise of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador in the last election – got as much as \$2.33 an hour extra as a result of that initiative that we brought in at a time of great difficulty.

People talk in this House of Assembly about pay equity. I'll tell you, you go in to child care centres in this province and you don't see a lot of dudes taking care of our children, it is a predominantly female workforce. This has gone a long way to leveling the playing field for women who work in that very important profession.

Also, last year, we reached a bilateral agreement with the federal government, which will provide, over a three-year period, \$22 million of federal funding for child care. The provincial government, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, this province did not have to contribute anything extra to that. Those are all federal dollars. We are going to be announcing very soon, in great detail, how we're going to put that money to work to make sure we have better quality, more affordable, more accessible early learning and child care in this province.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** I say, Mr. Speaker, when I came into this House of Assembly in 2011 – there are still a few of us here – there was a report by the Atkinson Centre at the University of Toronto, an organization of some reputation that studies the progress of child care in the provinces and reports on it on a regular basis. So it's like a report card, and the grading in that report is you can score a total of 15. There are a total of 15 points allocated to a variety of different areas.

The first year that I was in this House of Assembly, do you know what the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador scored on child care? Mr. Speaker, 1.5 out of 15. Do you know what we were last time? When this report was released very recently, it was just about a month ago, we were 8.5 out of 15.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** The highest scoring province in Canada only scored 11 out of 15. We have moved significantly. We have moved this significantly in a short period of time. Why is that? There are two reasons why; one – and I have seen it first-hand because I have had the privilege in my job to travel the province and talk to early childhood educators, to go to centres to see the work they're doing first-hand.

They are working hard and they are working with us. We are working together. Early childhood educators, owners of child care centres, not-for-profit groups who are creating new spaces, private operations, operators within centres; they're working with all of our regional and departmental staff to get things together so that we can improve the situation of child care in the province. As I said, just back in 2011 we were way behind the rest of the province.

Another thing that we did, Mr. Speaker, is we brought in full-day kindergarten a couple of years ago. In the first year there were about 5,000 children who benefited from a full day of kindergarten and we've had about another 5,000 again this year. That's 10,000 children who will have benefited from full-day kindergarten at the end of this year. I won't go into details because I've spoken about this issue in the House of Assembly many, many, many times.

We know that quality early learning and care and full-day kindergarten better prepares children for life, better prepared for grade one, better cognitive development, better mathematics literacy, better reading ability, more socialization. In other words, children, by being in a child care or a full-day kindergarten setting, learn how to get along with one another, learn how to treat others with respect, learn what is appropriate and learn what is not. Or as my mother would say, learn your pleases and thank-yous. But they learn that.

So full-day kindergarten was a long time coming to Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm proud to say that we saw it through. Because the fact of the matter is by the time we get to the next election – because the former premier, the Leader of the PC Party Opposition said yesterday the clock is ticking, and I'm glad the clock is ticking because I appreciate nothing more than an election campaign. I think all of us do. I look forward to knocking on doors in my district next time and telling my constituents – and I do it now when I'm knocking on doors in my district and out at events – that we'll have 20,000 children who have benefited from a full day of kindergarten, an initiative which was opposed by the NDP and opposed by the PC Party. That is the truth. If they had their way, they would have denied 20,000 Newfoundland and Labrador children a better opportunity to get a better start in life.

So I'll leave it to them to explain, but I was a bit taken back in the by-election in Mount Pearl North where I felt like we were being lectured by the NDP on child care when they're not even in favour of full-day kindergarten, let alone of anything else.

If you add up the sums of money, if people are interested in figures, over a three-year period in this province there will have been \$39 million, by the time they get to the next election, allocated to full-day kindergarten. There's the \$22 million over three years from the federal government. There's another \$9.9 million, cumulative, that we started to invest last year. So that takes us up to over \$70 million in new investments in early learning in this province just in three years –

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

**MR. KIRBY:** – at a time where people are saying on the Opposition benches the sky is falling. There's nothing good. There are no positive initiatives. It's all falling apart. We are in a transformational moment in education, in early year's education in Newfoundland and Labrador. This next generation – and I believe this to be true – will be better off as a result of it. They will be better citizens. They will be better equipped. They will be more able to build the Newfoundland and Labrador that we have been so lucky to inherit. They will stand here in the House of Assembly themselves and they will be better equipped than we were.

They will treat other children in a different way. The whole safe and caring philosophy is being instilled in children at an early age, besides what they get at home. They're getting a full day of care, either in a child care centre or in school. It's all regulated and there's an element of quality within it.

In addition to that, it enables people to go to work. It enables women to get into the workforce in greater numbers. We are doing everything that we possibly can. At a time of purported austerity, we have been able to make that \$70 million-plus investment in our tiniest children. I can't tell you how optimistic I am for the future of this province just by virtue of that one thing alone.

There's more. Yesterday, in the Speech from the Throne, Lieutenant-Governor spelled out the next stages of our plan for education in this province. The backbone of it is the task force the Premier appointed to make sure that we resolved some of the issues that have been most glaringly problematic in this province over the past number of years.

I encourage anyone who has not had an opportunity to go through this report to see what it is we are going to do. I note that I don't think I had a single question so far in this session – we are here now, this is the middle of the third week of this sitting and I have not gotten a single question about education from the Education critic for the Progressive Conservative Opposition. I've had lots to tell him but he has nothing to ask. At least I got questions from the NDP.

So far, with relatively small expense, we have been able to implement 15 recommendations of the 82 that were in the task force report; there are 67 left to go. The task force itself came in under budget. They came in almost 30 per cent under the budget that was allocated to them. They did it in the most frugal way possible and produced one of the most important public documents of our time. *Now is the Time* is the title of the report, and now is the time.

On March 27, we will see the path forward for education in this province for fixing the problems with the inclusive education model that the previous government implemented with very little consultation in this province, foisted it onto the system, created enormous stresses and strain for the school system. We will see a path forward for early literacy intervention in a way that we have not seen in quite a long time, if we have ever seen anything like it before. We will provide better supports for our children in schools to make sure they get the best start that they can in life.

The reason why I say we're living in a transformational moment in education in this province is if you look at what we have managed to do in such a short period of time, just over a couple of years, starting with the task force and our investments in early learning and child care, those children who are getting all that additional attention, who will get all that additional support, who will have a better quality educational experience from their earliest years right up through the system, they are going to have something that we didn't have, that children in the province don't have right now. In addition to that, teachers will have more opportunities to support children in classrooms, to deliver a modern 21st century curriculum in a way that will produce better outcomes.

We will start to see the value – we are already seeing, I would say, for those children who are in grade one this year, who were in full-day kindergarten last. We are seeing some of the benefits already, but over the course of their time in school we will see the benefit of this transformational moment that we are currently living in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It is certainly a pleasure to stand in this hon. House and speak this morning. Mr. Speaker, there are an awful lot of things that – the Speech from the Throne range from a whole gamut of issues and initiatives. There were a lot of things that were in the Speech from the Throne that basically outlined things that have already been done, things that are already underway and so on. That's fine.

There was a little bit of insight into a few new initiatives. One of the things, as has been mentioned, that I took away as a positive was the commitment that was in the Speech from the Throne to deal with the issue of violence against women and children. I think there's nobody in this House of Assembly, I'm sure, who would have any issue with that. There have been some initiatives taken already and from the sounds of it, there are going to be further initiatives that are going to be taken as time goes on.

I would say to the government, anything they do in that regard they'll certainly have my full support and I'm sure they will have the support of the entire House of Assembly. We all have either partners or mothers or sisters or daughters or friends and so on who could all be impacted by those issues.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Grandchildren.

**MR. LANE:** Grandchildren.

We certainly hope it never happens, but the statistics are very startling. As my colleague from the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis indicated earlier, anything we can do to support that initiative is very important. I'm sure we're all united on that issue. So that was a good thing.

There was also mention there of gender equity and ensuring there is more done to ensure that women have increased involvement in various industries and areas of employment and, in particular, leadership roles and that government was going to champion that cause. I know it's

something that, in particular, I hear from the Member for St. John's Centre and St. John's East - Quidi Vidi speaking to those issues all the time. I'm sure they're very pleased with that. I'm sure everyone in the House would support that initiative.

There were a lot of things there as well. They talked about a number of industries and things that government is trying to do to diversify the economy and to create jobs and so on. That's good to see. I think we all agree, there's a lot of opportunity that we have here in this province. We're certainly blessed with natural resources, I think like no other province, actually.

I don't think there's another province in Canada that actually has the amount of natural resources and opportunities that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador, whether it be with oil and gas, whether it be the vast mineral deposits that we have, both on the Island and in Labrador, in particular. There's no doubt about that. We have tremendous opportunity with the fishery. The fishery is certainly what brought people to Newfoundland to begin with. That's where we came from, was because of the fishery. It's still a billion-dollar resource, despite the challenges that we've had and continue to have, and there are things we need to work on for sure, which I'll just speak to a little bit later. But that's a resource that's there and it's an opportunity.

We have opportunities certainly in agriculture. I'm very pleased to see the government has taken some initiatives, whether it be freeing up Crown lands and other initiatives, in trying to grow the agriculture in our province. I think that's a very important initiative. I'm sure that everybody in the House would certainly support that, providing it's done properly and sustainably and so on.

Food security, as we know, is an issue here in our province. So whatever we can do to address the food security issue and at the same time grow that industry, provide employment for farmers and so on, and of course the spinoff associated to that, then that's something that we all need to be supportive of and working on, and I'm sure we do.

Also, anything we can do with our forestry. We still have a lot of opportunities with forestry, whether it be up on the Northern Peninsula – that's certainly in need of an economic boost, for sure. Although they are doing well in terms of some tourism and so on, but forestry, I think, is still something that needs to be worked on to help that area. Certainly forestry in Central Newfoundland, the Terra Nova area and so on, there are opportunities there, and that's going to create a lot of jobs.

All of these initiatives that we hear of and I'm pleased to hear government talk about these industries and initiatives they have taken, and the fact that they're indicating there's more to come in that regard, I think that's an important thing. I think it's something that we all should be supporting. Again, providing that it is done properly and sustainably, and provided it's done in a way that the number one beneficiary of those resources, whether it be fishery, whether it be forestry, whether it be agriculture, whether it be oil and gas, mining and so on, that the number one beneficiary of those resources are the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. And that's the key.

I think for far too long we have been exploiting our resources and it seems like Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not necessarily gaining the full benefit that they can and that they should in a lot of our industries. A lot of the benefit and a lot of the wealth go to other provinces and jurisdictions and private interests and not necessarily the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think in anything that we do, on a go-forward basis, certainly with our resources, we have to ensure that the principle of ensuring that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians benefit first and the most from our resources, that has to be key and not just for a few short-term jobs. Quite often, we've seen again in our history where we've seen things leave the province, short-term projects and so on, all for a few jobs, for a year or two or until the next election cycle. Unfortunately, we've seen that as well. That's not where we need to be as a province.

We need to ensure that if we're exploiting our resources, whatever they might be, that it's done in a sustainable, long-term vision. That it's not

just done for a few jobs for political purposes, that it's done for the long haul to benefit our people and our communities. As long as we can commit to do that and to stay on that track, then I'm sure that's something we would all support.

There's no doubt we have opportunities here in our province as it relates to tourism. Another very, very bright spot that we have in our province is tourism. There are numerous locations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, whether it be the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, whether it be our national parks, whether it be a lot of our historic sites, a lot of our small rural communities, the history associated to that, the beauty associated to that, whether it be the puffins and the whales, the icebergs, there are so many things that we have to offer here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The world is finding out about us, which is a good thing. I'm very glad to see that rubber tire traffic is up. That's a good thing.

When we talk about sometimes it's all about doom and gloom from the other side, I just want to say it's not. I agree. I want, I genuinely – and I'm sure we all do really – want government to succeed. There's nobody over here that wants government to fail.

We saw this little to and fro here and the Member for Burin Peninsula West, I believe the district is called, who took –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Placentia West – Bellevue.

**MR. LANE:** Okay, Placentia West – Bellevue.

I would say to that Member who took some exception to the Member for St. John's Centre: I want your town to succeed. I'm sure everybody here does. There's nobody here that doesn't want to see them succeed. There's nobody here that's saying we don't want jobs in Marystown or we don't want jobs in Burin, or we don't want jobs in Grand Bank. Of course we do. We all do because when those communities benefit, we all benefit.

I'm sure the Member for St. John's Centre feels the exact same way. To be honest with you, I never heard anything. Maybe other Members heard something that I didn't, but I did not hear



the Member say that she was against aquaculture. I didn't hear her say that. I just heard her say that there are people who have concerns about the environmental process.

That's a reasonable comment for anybody to make. Whether it's Grieg or whether it's any other aquaculture project, whether it's an oil and gas project, whatever it is, we have rules in place for a reason. We have environmental assessment processes in place for a reason. As long as they're followed and we can assure that things are done properly, done safely and done environmentally sustainable then, sure, of course, we're all in favour of that.

I would love to see 10 Griegs. I would love to see a hundred Griegs, if it's possible.

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

**MR. LANE:** Absolutely, if it can be shown that it can be done properly and it's not going to endanger our wild fish stocks. If it's done properly and we've got the scientific data to back it up and all the safeguards in place, I'd like to see a hundred of them. Absolutely. Why wouldn't we?

I'd like to see 10 mines open up in Labrador tomorrow. I'd like to see them all open up because there are a number of them. It's not just Wabush and the IOC. I know for a fact, and I'm sure the Member could confirm, there are a number of mines up in Labrador that are not open yet that have been discovered. There's a big uranium mine, as I understand it; there are two or three iron ore mines, Alderon and there are some others.

We have mining potential here on the Island. We want to see it all going. Absolutely, go gangbusters, give it to her. The same thing with oil and gas; we've only just scratched the surface on oil and gas. Scratched the surface of what's out there, the potential.

I would give credit to the former administration on the work they did on the seismic data that showed – and it's true, you have to give credit where credit is due. They invested in seismic data that has shown there is tremendous potential all around the Island and right up the

coast of Labrador. It's there. That's absolutely fantastic.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It's not going anywhere.

**MR. LANE:** The Member says it's not going anywhere. It's not. That's right. It's not going anywhere. It's there for us to use and for us to benefit from.

No, it's not all doom and gloom. Absolutely, we will eventually turn the corner. I am really convinced that we will.

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

**MR. LANE:** There are always going to be peaks and valleys, no doubt about it. Yes, as the Minister of AESL said, we've always had people leaving the province. It's not a new phenomenon, everybody knows that. If you look back in time, there was always Newfoundlanders heading up to Alberta or Toronto or wherever they were going. There are lots of young people who graduate from Memorial University that want to leave.

Granted, there is no doubt, I have heard from people who have said they're leaving the province because they can't find work or they can't afford the taxes and so on. If we're all going to be honest about it, we've all heard it. I'm not saying it's widespread and everyone is saying it. I can't say I've heard it from 1,000 people but I've gotten, I don't know, a dozen emails or so in the last year from people saying they're gone, I'm gone and this is the reason why. We've all gotten that, no doubt, but there have always been people who left Newfoundland.

A lot of young people don't want to stay in Newfoundland because they see greater opportunity on the Mainland. I know people personally who have left who said one of the reasons is I like to travel and it's so expensive just to get off the Island. So if I live over here in Ontario somewhere, I can get aboard the car and I can drive down to the states and so on. I can drive there in a day or so. It's really cheap to do and so on. There's more opportunity to travel or there's more entertainment, because I want to go see major league baseball games, hockey games and stuff that I can't see in Newfoundland.

There are people who would say there are other reasons, whether it be more opportunity in their chosen field on the Mainland. So that's always happened and it's always going to happen, there's no doubt about it. As I indicated, that's not to say there are no concerns that people have, because there are concerns that people have. Nobody can deny that there are concerns.

Now, I heard the Minister of Education talking about early childhood education, full-day kindergarten. That's a good thing. We support that. I heard the minister say the Members over on this side – now he didn't name me specifically, he said the PCs and the NDP – were against full-day kindergarten. I have to be honest, I never heard a Member – I never heard it. They might have said it, maybe they wrote him a letter and said we're against it but I never heard them say they were against it. I certainly never said I was against it.

I said at the time, during *Budget 2016*, that we're going to tax everyone to death. We don't have enough resources for children in the system now, children with special needs, overcrowded classrooms and all of that. If we can't afford to do what we have now, then maybe full-day kindergarten is not the right thing to do at this time if we can't afford what we have now. I said that. We all said that, but no one said we're opposed to full-day kindergarten. I think that's where the rhetoric has to stop. I think that's where the rhetoric has to stop on all sides and let's talk the reality of the situation.

So, yes, I'm glad that things are working out for education. I look forward to the implementation of the recommendations on the Premier's Task Force on Education. We all do (inaudible). If there are things in that task force that are recommended and we agree they're good things and the government says no, we're not going to do them for some reason, we might question that.

We might question the timing, we might question the cost, we might question all those things. That's our job. It doesn't mean we're against it. It just means we're questioning it, because that's what we're here to do. We're here to question those things. That's the role that Opposition has. It's not about opposing for the sake of opposing. It's about raising questions

and concerns when questions and concerns arise, because believe it or not, every single thing the government does is not necessarily going to be perfect. I know that might be hard to believe but it's true.

Any government, it's not all going to be perfect. The intent might be good, there might be an issue with the roll out, there might be an issue with the timing. There could be issues. It could be 99 per cent good, but there's an issue. There are some smaller items that could be massaged.

That's why when we come to this House of Assembly we debate legislation. That's why sometimes you see amendments or you see Members here vote in favour of a bill, but they still question things. So we acknowledge that's a good bill. What you're doing is a good thing but we have a couple of concerns. This is something that could be done a little bit differently to make it better. That's what we're here to do.

It all comes down to, I think, mutual respect, working together for the people who elected us. In fairness, I say to the Member for the Burin Peninsula, I understand he has a role. I totally understand he has a role to stand up for the people of his district. Those jobs are very, very important for the people of his district. He said he's got a list of 1,700 names on a petition, I'm sure that could be 17,000. Because, of course, people are in favour of it. They need jobs. They need economic development, spinoff and all that stuff. So good for him for speaking up and supporting the people of his district.

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

**MR. LANE:** Absolutely, I agree with that. I agree with that. That's his job. It's only what any of us would do. But – the only but I'll say – just because Members question certain things or ask questions doesn't automatically mean we're against you or we're against your district and so on, because we're not.

We're just simply putting out questions and concerns that we're hearing on certain issues just to make sure things are done properly, fairly, sustainably and so on. At least that's why I put out the issues. I have no political – I have no horse in the race here. I couldn't care less who wins the next election, to be honest with you. I

couldn't care less. I'm just trying to put it out as I see it for the people who have elected me.

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

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

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, I see I am starting to run out of time, but I will acknowledge that it's not all doom and gloom. I will agree with that, but there are concerns. There are concerns. People have concerns and we have a role to bring those concerns forward.

I hear, I'm sure all Members hear, people still have concerns about the affordability issue, seniors and so on. I know there's a seniors supplement for seniors on very low incomes but for seniors who might have a small pension, and now all of a sudden that extra 15 per cent tax we're going to be talking about today on insurance, the levy, different things like that are all impacting them. They have concerns and we're going to continue to bring those concerns on their behalf.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I would move that we adjourn debate on Address in Reply and with the consent of my colleagues, I would suggest we recess until 2 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER:** In accordance with paragraph 9(1)(b) of the Standing Orders, this House is in recess until 2 o'clock this afternoon.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

We have several guests today that I'd like to draw the Members' attention to. First of all, in the Speaker's gallery, I'm very proud to welcome retired Airforce Veteran, Mr. Mike Jackman; he's going to be the subject of a Members' statement today. A great welcome to you, Sir.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** And we have some great mayors visiting us today. In the public gallery I have Mr. Daniel Veilleux, he is the Mayor of Lushes Bight-Beaumont and he is joined by his wife, Mrs. Laura Lee Rowsell.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** And way over on the other end of the island from the community of Channel-Port aux Basques, we have the Deputy Mayor Todd Strickland, Councillor Mel Keeping and Town Manager Leon MacIsaac.

Thank you to all of you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I believe that's my intros.

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** For Members' statements today we will be hearing from the Districts of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Lewisporte - Twillingate, Exploits, Conception Bay East - Bell Island and Harbour Main.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today's statement is about determination, family, community support and the power of prayer.

Forty-three year old Curtis Bullen of Bay Roberts is a father of two young boys, Mitchel and Tyson. He is a husband to Melissa Ralph, formerly of Port de Grave. The Bullen's are active members of the community and their church, the Port de Grave Pentecostal Tabernacle.

In July of 2014, Curtis was diagnosed with stage 4 kidney cancer, learning that the disease had also spread to other organs. This news was devastating, but with so much to live for, Curtis and his family have become stronger and more determined than ever.

With the challenges of treatments and surgeries, their journey has been difficult but the community support they continue to receive is amazing. Curtis has been very strong but when he and Melissa met with the doctor in January they were told that all treatment options have been exhausted. In spite of this, Curtis told me he isn't giving up.

Their faith is strong. People from Cambodia, Africa, Florida, Texas, British Columbia and across our country all the way to Newfoundland are praying for the Bullen family.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Members in this hon. House keep Curtis Bullen and his family in their prayers.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

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

On February 28, I had the privilege of attending the 15th Annual Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP) ceremony of the Student Volunteer Bureau at Memorial University.

VIP was created to recognize and encourage student involvement in volunteer and leadership activities. By combining volunteerism with valuable life and career skills, participants will realize their potential as student leaders. The skills students acquire through the VIP will assist them in their personal and professional development.

Participants in the program entered at the bronze level and ascend through silver, gold and platinum. Approximately 200 students were recognized for their contributions during this year's ceremony.

I'm proud to say that five young ladies from my district who actively volunteered, while maintaining academic success, were acknowledged during the ceremony. Amber Tremblett received gold and platinum; Kristen Peckford: platinum; Laura Peckford: silver and gold; Taylor Ivany: bronze and silver; and Cayley Thoms: bronze.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members in this House to join me in congratulating the recipients of these prestigious awards and to thank them for their valuable contributions.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to acknowledge Mr. Wilson Bridger and his 40 years of voluntary service with the Kinsmen Club of Botwood, for which on May 13, 2017 he was presented with the Life Membership, the highest award that the Kinsmen Club of Canada can bestow upon a member.

Wilson joined Kinsmen in 1977 and has served on all executive positions during those four decades. Wilson has served on the Zone executive, has received Kinsmen of the Year three times and, in 2015, was named the Town of Botwood's Citizen of the Year.

Anywhere that a helping hand is needed, be it with the Kinsmen or with other groups in the town and beyond, is where you will find Wilson. A modest and humble person, Wilson doesn't do it for recognition. He takes great pride in the club's motto: Serving the Community's Greatest Needs.

Wilson is helping to make the world a better place.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join with me in congratulating Kin Wilson Bridger on his Kinsmen Club of Canada Life Membership award.

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

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

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

I stand today to acknowledge a resident of my district who I had the pleasure of presenting a special award to a few weeks ago. I speak of retired Air Force Veteran Michael Jackman, who was awarded the 60-year pin as a member of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Michael has held various positions in the Legion movement in various branches over his 60 years of serving this great organization. At 85 years of age, he still participates as an active member of the Color Party and helps organize the annual Poppy Drive.

Michael joined the Canadian Air Force in 1951 and served in various parts of the world but, particularly, all through Europe. Upon his arrival back in Canada, Mike joined the Legion in 1956 and he started a lifetime of supporting aims and objectives of this organization.

Mike, a native of Bell Island, served as member of Branch 18 on Bell Island and continues to serve in Branch 10 in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, his adopted home for the last 20 years. Mike has been a volunteer in numerous organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador that enhance the lives of people from one to 100.

I would be remiss if I didn't note that Mike's father, the late David Nish Jackman, was the first member elected after Confederation to represent the District of Harbour Main - Bell Island in this hallowed House.

I ask all Members to congratulate and thank Mike for his dedication and commitment to the Legion movement.

I salute you, my friend.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** And if I may, before I go on to the next item, I would also like to welcome into the public gallery Mayor Paul Pike of St. Lawrence and Mayor John Strang of Lawn.

Welcome to you both.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I've been thrown off. I will explain at some point.

Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, this week I joined ministers and parliamentarians from across the country and around the world, as well as representatives from labour, education and civil society at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York City.

The Canadian delegation was led by the Minister of Status of Women Canada. Several representatives from this province attended including leaders from the Canadian Federation of University Women, Unifor and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour.

The session at the United Nations – in which Canada played a major role – was integral to advancing the rights and equality of women and girls. It was an honour to be part of the empowering general assembly and participate in sessions on gender-based violence and accountability measures for gender equality, and to discuss gender-based analysis in policies, programs, services, legislation and budgets to ensure equitable outcomes for women in decision making by governments.

As was said during the assembly, “evidence proves that investing in gender equality and the health, rights and well-being of girls and women, creates a ripple effect that spurs growth and progress for all.”

While at the United Nations session, I also had the opportunity to meet with my national colleagues on how we can continue to

collaborate on initiatives of gender equality and violence prevention.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to advancing the status of women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador. We do not want half the population left behind in opportunity or advancement. This is just one of the many reasons why it is important to share our voices in the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. I'm very glad to hear about the minister's commitment to advancing the status of women and girls; I share this commitment. It is imperative that we place a gender lens on all of the decisions made and that we continue the conversation on how to eliminate gender-based violence in our communities.

While the minister indicated that she is committed to advancing gender equity and the status of women and girls, I was disappointed to see only vague references to her plan in yesterday's Throne Speech. The minister also failed to provide specifics on which tools she will use and which processes she will introduce. I look forward to seeing legislation which the government will bring forward in this sitting of the House and encourage the minister to make sure that the legislation is strong enough to truly protect women and girls in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister. I wholeheartedly agree with the statement that investing in gender equality improves everyone's lives. I also agree we don't

want to leave half the population behind in opportunity or advancement, or in any way for that matter. That is why I am patient to see pay equity legislation.

My private Member's motion on this issue a year ago was supported by government; yet, we still see no evidence of action.

We know the problem. It's time. I ask government, where is there pay equity legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

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

I rise today to recognize March as National Nutrition Month.

The provincial government is pleased to support Nutrition Month in partnership with dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador and many of our community partners. The theme of this year's campaign is, "Unlock the Potential of Food" and is dedicated to helping Canadians understand food's limitless potential. Food does more than just fuel our bodies; it also brings together family and friends and teaches us about culture and tradition.

Mr. Speaker, our province has some of the highest rates of chronic disease in Canada. We know that enjoying a healthy lifestyle, which includes eating well, can help to prevent the development and advancement of diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. This is why in *The Way Forward* we have committed to increasing fruit and vegetable consumption along with increasing physical activity rates and decreasing obesity rates.

Today, March 14, is also Dietitians Day. Dietitians throughout our province work to promote healthy eating in our communities and hospitals, rehabilitation centres, in primary care, long-term care, private practice, government, public health, industry and educational

institutions. Dietitians are passionate about the potential of food to enhance lives and improve health.

I invite all Members of this hon. House to please join me in thanking dietitians throughout our province for their great work and to recognize their valuable contributions to the health of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. We join with government in recognizing National Nutrition Month, our province's dietitians and our valued community partners.

While I was happy to hear government commit to increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, along with increasing physical activity rates and decreasing obesity rates, after two years in government we have not seen any significant movement towards reaching these goals. And even more concerning, they have offered no plan showing how they will achieve it. Hopefully, they'll share an action plan soon.

Mr. Speaker, dietitians throughout our province are busy every day improving lives and promoting healthy eating habits in our communities and its various facilities. We celebrate their contributions today, March 14, Dietitians Day, and offer our sincere gratitude and appreciation for their most valuable work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister.

Bravo to the dietitians of the province who, pardon the pun, serve us so well. So many of the chronic diseases people suffer from in this province can be relieved by a healthier diet.

It is great to encourage the eating of more fruits and vegetables, but it is also essential that these foods are affordable for people. Our seniors on OAS and GIS, people with diabetes on income support simply cannot afford the food that is essential to their well-being. It's a real problem that needs a real solution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

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

Last year, Newfoundland and Labrador surpassed 553,000 non-resident visitors for the first time and non-resident spending was the highest this province has ever seen.

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Government is eager to build on this momentum, which is why I'm pleased to report that we have made some great strides in improving the sense of arrival to our province.

As an action of *The Way Forward*, we collaborated with industry partners and tourism stakeholders to establish a standard sense of arrival goals, priorities and initiate partnership activities. This initiative aligns with the Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan, which suggests the best practices for welcoming visitors, beautification, wayfinding and other visitor services to guide strategic investment and help enable more partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, during a recent tour of the St. John's International Airport expansion, I saw first-hand how this new sense of arrival strategy will welcome visitors in ways that are representative of our province's brand pillars of people, culture and natural environment. St.

John's International Airport receives 71 per cent of all air visitors that travel into our province, and their new expansion will certainly enhance visitors' sense of arrival in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Along with other major airports across the province, investments have also been made at our Provincial Visitor Information Centres, to create innovative spaces that showcase stunning iconic imagery of the province. We also developed a standardized identifier to promote public Wi-Fi.

Mr. Speaker, sense of arrival can greatly impact repeat visitation, satisfaction, length of stay and spending. By honouring this commitment from *The Way Forward*, we want visitors to feel instantly welcome and at home, connected to our people and to this place. By improving the province's sense of arrival, we will increase our competitive edge and heighten Newfoundland and Labrador as a destination.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. and very busy Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Each and every year, tourists travel throughout our entire province visiting our beautiful landscapes and joining in on our new cultural experiences. Mr. Speaker, our caucus is most proud of our people, culture and natural environment and the adventure that this province offers to our visitors.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that last year non-resident visitors and non-resident spending increased; however, I urge government to take action which will encourage visitors to have a pleasurable visit and plan their next visit back. To guarantee that tourists who visit this province enjoy their stay, we also need to ensure they have good quality roads to drive on and strong local business conditions and communities. Sadly, government is currently failing on both.

We all know the tourist potential of the province. This year, I encourage everyone to explore the wonderful experience the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

I thank the minister. I did have a bit of a hard time understanding what this sense of arrival was and that maybe the minister was going to be there giving people Sou'westers and a drop of screech or kiss his cod, I'm not sure. But, it's exciting to see an increase in tourists –

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** – and other visitors in our province. Congratulations to all those who work in tourism, arts and heritage sectors on this success. Folks who provide the experiences visitors love are great ambassadors and many of these people work very hard to stretch their limited resources every year, often not knowing if they will receive government's funding until the tourist season is well underway.

We cannot keep expecting them to do better with less. We need to do more to support these people whose work benefits the whole province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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



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

Mr. Speaker, here in the House on Monday when asked if the \$600 million severance payout included agencies, boards and commissions, the Minister of Finance answered, and I quote: “Yes, Mr. Speaker, all public servants is what severance will be paid out to.” However, later the media reported that not all ABCs were included.

So I ask the minister: Is Nalcor included in your \$600 million estimate?

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

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

All public servants, with the exception of Nalcor, are included in the \$600 million figure. Nalcor is negotiating their own contract. We’re certainly encouraging them to follow what government has done and pay out severance, as it does reduce a liability, but all other public servants including all other agencies and boards are included in that figure.

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

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

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

I ask the minister: How much more will be added to his \$600 million estimate when Nalcor is included?

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

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

I don’t have that number but we can certainly obtain that number from Nalcor.

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

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

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

I believe the minister is on the record as saying there’s a negotiation underway. If there’s a negotiation underway and there’s a discussion on severance, I would think the minister would have that number.

Minister, you don’t have the number and you’re telling us now here today in the House that all other agencies, boards and commissions are included, such as Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, library boards, WorkplaceNL, Memorial and health care authorities. Are they all included?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, all agencies, boards and commissions are included. Nalcor is the one that is the exception. They are negotiating their own contract. All agencies, boards and commissions that government negotiate for are included in that figure.

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

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

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

With all respect to the minister, severance would be a factual number; it shouldn’t be part of a negotiation. I’m a little bit surprised the minister can’t tell us what that number is.

The Minister of Finance said on Monday as well, and I quote: The savings to the provincial government are \$35 million a year, less the \$10 million that we’re putting aside to repay the loan in order to borrow to pay out severance.

I ask the minister: If you’re paying \$10 million a year on the \$600 million loan, how long will it take to fully repay that loan?

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

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

The \$10 million is paid on interest to borrow.

As the hon. Member should know – he was Premier at one particular point – the only time we actually pay down on loans is when there's a surplus, and those numbers, even with their government, in the wealthiest decade this province has ever had, were far and few between, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The minister is on record as saying the savings are \$35 million, less the \$10 million they're paying aside.

When does he expect the loan to be repaid, is my question to the minister.

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

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

We are hoping to be back to surplus by 2022-23. At that particular point, Mr. Speaker, we are hoping to be able to start paying down on the province's debt. Something that grew, even though we had the wealthiest decade this province has ever experienced, \$25 billion in oil royalties and they couldn't pay the debt down.

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

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

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

Yes, the minister opposite was a Cabinet minister during that time period that he's talking about, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, the minister is saying there are going to be a savings. If he's moving the liability from severance to a loan and they're not paying down the loan, the loan is going to stay on the books for a period of time; it's going to cost \$10 million on interest.

What is the full and actual cost of moving the severance over? Or is it just moving it from one pot to another?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I'll correct the hon. Member opposite that I was not a Cabinet minister since 2007. At that particular point, I believe we did have a surplus and the province's spending was at \$5.4 billion.

It grew while that Member was a Cabinet minister from \$5.4 billion to over \$8 billion, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. Member should have a look in the mirror.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I remind the Minister of Finance under his watch spending on the Department of Health went up 10 per cent when he was a Cabinet minister in the Department of Health, I might point out to him.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier –

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

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

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

Premier, are there currently any discussions and/or decisions to sell any electrical transmission assets to Fortis?

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

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

I think everyone in this province would understand what the situation is within the province. Mr. Speaker, like all assets, we will always be open to discussions, but right now we're not having those discussions.

I will say this: If there is somebody out there who's interested in coming and working with this province, regardless of what the assets

would be – it could be land or schools that we've done – the situation of this province is always open for review.

Any decision, I can tell you, on any asset would always be done on whatever the evidence is and will always be done to the benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, regardless of what that asset is.

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

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

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

(Inaudible) indicates discussions are underway but we haven't been told.

I ask the Premier: Are there discussions with Fortis to buy other assets outside of transmission assets?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, we are always open if companies, like Fortis or anyone else that the Member opposite might know, that's interested in coming and working with this government to help this position that they have left us in.

There was no doubt that Fortis was in discussions with them. As a matter of fact, it was Fortis that they kicked out of the room, virtually, when they wanted to go in and participate in a transmission line from Quebec.

So no, there are no discussions with Fortis on assets within our province, but, Mr. Speaker, I don't think any Newfoundlander and Labradorian should come in here and suggest that working with any company, any private company – as a matter of fact, it was the Members opposite who were willing to have long-term care sites, hospitals in this province, shipped outside with outside companies, Mr. Speaker. And guess what? Staff those long-term care sites with private sector workers.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, to clarify in terms of unionized workers, we said it was open. People have a right to unionize and if they want to have union representation, they can have it. No one said you were barring union representation. The Premier should get his facts straight.

Has there been any discussion with Hydro-Québec to sell Muskrat Falls power and transmit it west onto Hydro-Québec's transmission grid for sale?

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

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

Based on the price that we see at Muskrat Falls, the only people in this room today, the only people in this province thinks that there's someone willing to connect into it, is that crowd over there, Mr. Speaker. They forced the people of this province into that situation.

Do you think really Hydro-Québec would be interested in purchasing Muskrat Falls power at this exorbitant rate when they're producing it themselves, some 44 megawatts of power in their own province, at rates that are much, much less?

So no, Mr. Speaker – I would welcome a call, though. I would more than welcome a call from Hydro-Québec if they want to plug into Muskrat Falls power. Because do you know what? That would be more money that we could use to mitigate rates in our province.

Right now, ironically, Mr. Speaker, we can actually purchase power from Nova Scotia at cheaper rates. How ironic was that? I didn't see that in their business plan.

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

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

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

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

It was the Premier who said no one wanted the electricity, no one wanted to buy it, yet Massachusetts and New Hampshire have just cut a deal with Hydro-Québec for 11 terawatts of power. Hydro-Québec can't even supply that. So where are they getting the power from?

No one wants it according to this Premier, but that's not what's going on in the Eastern Seaboard. It's time for him to tune in to electricity and what's going on.

Mr. Speaker, has there been discussions on the –

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

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

Please proceed.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Has there been discussions on the renegotiations of the Upper Churchill agreement set to expire in 2041 with Hydro-Québec or with the Quebec government?

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

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

I thank the Member opposite for going to school, but I tell you what, he missed the bell because I didn't hear anything ring over there.

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite is talking about getting an education on electricity rates in the US, I'd say to the Member opposite: Is he prepared to have Newfoundlanders and Labradorians subsidize rates into the US – it sounds like you are – at exorbitant amounts, maybe three times the cost?

Mr. Speaker, before I take a lesson from the Member opposite, I think he should educate himself on what really is the demand in the US because, I'm going to tell you what, it's not at Muskrat Falls rates.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** (Inaudible) doom and gloom. Yesterday he was singing the praises and now it's doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't know where he's to; he's all over the map.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we know that the CEO of Nalcor can hold up to 5 per cent shares in the publicly traded company Fortis and now we're hearing that Fortis is looking to purchase transmission assets from Nalcor.

I ask the minister: Has Mr. Marshall been involved in any discussions related to the sale of assets to Fortis?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Well, doom and gloom, it was yesterday the Leader of the Opposition read the obituary for Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

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

**PREMIER BALL:** He read the obituary, Mr. Speaker.

It was his government – we need to look back; I do it sometimes for a bit of entertainment. I look back at the last PC plan. I've kept it. They've taken it off their website, but we kept it. As a matter of fact, it's nice, Mr. Speaker, to just revisit because they came up shooting blanks. They still think today that oil is at – guess what – nearly \$80 a barrel. This is the PC plan for the future of our province. One of these days, I'd encourage them to dust up their plan, come with some solutions because we heard none yesterday.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is the Premier, just a short time ago, talked about the least, lowest and last in terms of Newfoundland and Labrador and he talks about doom and gloom. Yesterday, it's magic dust; it's supposed to be all happy again. They don't know where they are to; they're all over the map.

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

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

Please proceed.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, in November 2016 the Minister of Natural Resources said: "... I went a little bit further and asked Mr. Marshall to remove himself from anything else with regards to Fortis, for example, any discussion around that, even though he is not in conflict."

I ask the minister: Has Mr. Marshall reported to you that he has removed himself from discussion on the sale of Nalcor assets to Fortis?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak to the preamble because that was in 2015 when I gave that speech, a lot of people in attendance – I didn't see him there. Mr. Speaker, what we were talking about then was the Tory administration.

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

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Things have changed. When he talks about we should go around the province, I am going around the province and I do it quite often. Everyone on this side of the House does that and I would welcome the Member to my District of Humber - Gros Morne any time he wants. I will tell you what; he will hear in my district what I am hearing there: They are not very proud of what you left the people of this province with.

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

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

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

I'll tell the Premier when an election comes, I'll go meet with the people and they'll decide my future, as they will his. I have no problem with that.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker –

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance: What is the result to the Provincial Treasury of Husky's recent shutdown due to not following the C-NLOPB ice management plan?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I will get the answer to that question for the Member. I can tell him the effect to the Treasury –

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** – of estimating \$12 billion in return to the province from Muskrat Falls and estimating that Muskrat Falls debt would be paid off in eight years, that was the 2015 plan. You talk about pixie dust and fairy dust, that's where the pixie dust and fairy dust was when they estimated that only \$3.1 billion would have to be invested into Muskrat Falls.

Mr. Speaker, make no wonder 65 per cent of the people of this province at that time thought it was a good deal. That's not the number anymore.

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

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

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

The Minister of Finance, even the prior minister, used to be able to get us information. On Monday he couldn't get the information.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Yesterday he didn't have the information. Today he doesn't have the information. I don't know what he's doing in the Department of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Minister of Finance: Do you think financial penalty should be imposed on the operations of the Sea Rose FPSO to offset losses budgeted in 2017?

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

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

I thank the Member opposite for the question. He should direct that question to C-NLOPB who are doing the investigation, Mr. Speaker, into this. They are the ones that are required to do the investigation under the accord act.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House on multiple occasions, the C-NLOPB is doing their investigations. The final report, I'm sure, will be before us in due course.

Mr. Speaker, the C-NLOPB has put in requirements for Husky to follow. Those requirements are stringent. It is very essential that we have safety and security in our offshore. The people of the province deserve that. The people who are working there deserve that. That is what the C-NLOPB is doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I remind the minister, her and the federal minister are included in the regulatory framework in terms of the C-NLOPB and what

the requirements are. The actual incident happened. They infringed quite clearly on the ice management plan. There have been no penalties to date. The Treasury is affected by it.

As the Minister of Natural Resources, don't you believe there should be some penalties in terms of what transpired? They violated the actual plan that was in place.

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

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

I would say to the Member opposite that C-NLOPB has been very diligent on this file. Everyone knows that, of course, there was a huge penalty to Husky by having to stop production, not just in terms of shutting down production and having to go before the C-NLOPB with their ice management plans and how they're going to ensure that process will be followed in the future, but also on their reputation, Mr. Speaker. We're here in this House today speaking about it.

Mr. Speaker, C-NLOPB is doing their analysis and their review. They have taken some actions already to Husky. They will continue to do their investigation and we'll see what the outcome is. It is C-NLOPB's responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

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

A recent RFP for the South Coast ferry service asked proponents to come up with their own service models.

I ask the minister: Has a new provider been selected?

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

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

(Inaudible) the RFP process closed a few weeks ago. We're in the evaluation process right now and we will take our time as we go through that to make sure that the bids are consistent, what we're looking for and we'll certainly let the people of the South Coast know when the RFP evaluation is complete.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The Transportation and Works Minister notes that they wanted to provide this service in a cost-effective manner. Residents are concerned that their service will be cut.

Minister, will your budget contain a reduction in the number of runs each week?

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

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

First of all, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member wants to wait, the budget will be on March 27.

Mr. Speaker, what we have to do when we talk about ferries throughout this province is find a balance. Mr. Speaker, we subsidize ferries over 90 per cent in this province and we have to make sure that we service the people in these communities, absolutely, but we also have to take into consideration that we have 500,000 other taxpayers in the province that are a part of this and we have to make sure we're getting the best value for our money.

I'm not going to take a whole lot of questions and a whole lot of inquiries from the Members opposite on ferries. They're the ones who went to Romanian and spent \$50 million on ferries and forgot the wharf.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. PERRY:** Regardless of how big or how small the community, every single Newfoundlander and Labradorian is important to this side of the House.

The RFP indicates that each community must receive at least one trip each day. Are you going to cut the service to the bare bones so that it's all these communities receive?

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the RFP, the RFP was quite clear. The RFP does guarantee one trip per day.

Mr. Speaker, we have some ferries in these communities operating with one and two and three people for a vessel trip, and that is not responsible to the taxpayers of this province. If there is a warrant for the runs, we'll make sure they're there, Mr. Speaker, but we're not going to be operating ferries at like 5 per cent capacity. It's not going to happen. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, we've seen a number of troubling developments coming out of Central Health. First, the announcement of an external review to examine what has been called a toxic environment, then the hospital chief of staff resigns and, most recently, the CEO of Central Health abruptly leaves.

How can the minister, with all confidence, suggest that there will be no impact on patient care when there's been so much chaos within management?

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

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

An important question, particularly for the people of Central.

The issues in Central Health relate specifically to the relationship between management and the communities – the communities, the board – and need to be looked into because there were concerns raised by a wide variety of stakeholders. That process is underway. Dr. Vaughan is currently in the region meeting with interested parties in a confidential way and in due course he will present his report.

There will be an announcement about an interim CEO within the next two weeks, and the recruitment process under the Independent Appointments Commission for a permanent replacement is well underway.

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

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

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

The disarray is not exclusive to Central Health. We have seen turmoil within the leadership at Labrador-Grenfell Health as well. While the minister calls it an unfortunate coincidence, the public sees it as much more than that.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** How can people have faith in our health system when its leadership is in constant turmoil?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker.

I'll stick with the fact that the CEO of Labrador-Grenfell's contract expired and he chose to pursue an alternate career – with which the Member opposite, I think he's quite familiar as his campaign manager.

The facts of the case are this was a contract that was due to expire. The Independent

Appointments Commission opted to roll the reappointment of the CEO for Lab-Grenfell into that of Western Health to make sure the pool was as good as it could be. That process is nearly concluded and I'm confident that an excellent successor will be found to the current Member opposite's campaign partner.

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

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

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

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

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

So let's just do some education here. The CEO resigned after fulfilling a 35 year career. An interim CEO was appointed who refused to stay at the end of it because no work had been done to do the replacement because of inability by the department to get its act together. Since we've gone that process, we have lack of leadership in another health authority because the department is not doing their job. It's a pretty simple question; we look for some direction there.

Recently, as personal stories by a specialist who formally practiced in Carbonear surfaced on social media, he and his wife, both physicians, left the community due to what is referred to as a clear lack of support by management.

Will the minister admit that the problem isn't exclusive to Central Health and commit to a review across the board of all health authorities?

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

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

The gentleman who departed from Labrador-Grenfell Regional Health Authority did so to pursue another career at the end of his contract. He opted not to reapply for the job and decided that his future lay elsewhere.

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



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

**MR. HAGGIE:** That is something that the Member opposite is well familiar with.

There is no turmoil that he describes. That is a fiction, again, generating fear that we have become accustomed to, particularly in the last 24 hours in response to the Throne Speech, for example. This, unfortunately, is the role of partisan leadership politics trying to figure into health care, which is doing quite well at the moment and will continue to prosper once we get the leadership of Labrador-Grenfell sorted out.

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

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

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

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

Again, I'll clarify. Only a number of weeks ago the Minister of Health stood here and said: There's no turmoil in any of our health authorities, it was a communications issue that prevented people from getting cancer treatment. There wasn't a lack of staffing, it was communications.

We've heard after that, that wasn't indeed the fact. The fact was there was mismanagement because there was lack of leadership and no direction from the department. It's not good enough when we deal with people's health in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Can you provide an update to this House on any decision on the proposal by Dr. French to improve access to cardiac surgery on the West Coast?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Dr. French is an excellent specialist, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** But he's actually an eye doctor, not a heart doctor.

Mr. Speaker, the issue around the Humber Valley surgical proposal has gone to the NLMA. It was part of a negotiated clause put in by the previous minister of Health, the former Member for Mount Pearl North, to look at the moving of hospital delivered services into the private sector.

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

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** The NLMA want to be part of that process, have negotiated on behalf of physicians for many years. Dr. French's proposal is part and parcel of that. When they have done their analysis, they will present some recommendations to the department.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

Can the Minister of Fisheries give us an update on the lost quota in the Grand Bank plant or has he given up?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for a quick response, please.

**MR. BYRNE:** No, Mr. Speaker, we have certainly not given up. We have not given up on Marystown. We have not given up on the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador, as that Member did when he had an opportunity to effect change.

Mr. Speaker, I have had an opportunity to speak, not only to indigenous communities throughout Atlantic Canada, but I have expanded that region and have spoken to fisheries ministers from across Atlantic Canada and Quebec to ensure that we speak with a solid voice, to express to the federal minister that we are very, very concerned about the way the approach to this decision was taken, to ask for it to be rescinded

and to put forward a framework for a better process, a better way of making these kinds of decisions as we seek reconciliation.

Mr. Speaker, this House is firm on that.

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

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

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

On Monday, the Minister of Health and Community Services partially blamed long ER wait times on people who don't belong there. I've learned that St. Clare's hospital ER these days is regularly operating over capacity, sometimes even at double capacity.

I ask the minister, if the closure of four beds at St. Clare's since Christmas may also be impacting the wait times?

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

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

The issue of utilization of emergency departments is a subject close to my own heart. It is an issue with access, based on the fact that, unfortunately, the problem of acute care is going to have to be fixed in the community. It is an issue of access to primary care. We have and will continue to roll out primary health care teams across this province to remove the need for people with minor ailments to have to go to an emergency department.

We have announcements coming, and there will be more to come as the primary health care renovation rolls out, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I thank the minister for leading directly into my second question.

I applaud the efforts around the primary health care centres. I also add that urgent care centres run by nurse practitioners and RNs would also help.

I would like from the minister a more definite timeline with regard to when this is all going to be put in place because we have a crisis.

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

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

Again, it seems to be a theme over the last 24 hours for using emotive language. This is not as the Member opposite would characterize.

There is a challenge. Primary health care teams are rolling out. We have announced and will be announcing teams on the Burin Peninsula and in Corner Brook. That was in *The Way Forward*. We have others lined up for Botwood and other areas in the province as and when those individuals have been recruited and put in place.

These are custom made for the areas in which they are being placed, Mr. Speaker. There is no generic one-off, one-stop shop. These are specifically designed to meet the needs of the communities in which they are located, and that includes St. John's as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The Newfoundland and Labrador fishery is valued at over \$1 billion annually. No one is opposed to economic development but we need to be smart about economic opportunities so we can create real, sustainable long-lasting jobs.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to requiring Grieg to complete a thorough environmental impact statement on their aquaculture project to ensure that our vital, sustainable industry is also

protected regardless of the upcoming court decision?

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

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

I thank the Member for the question, because this is a question that has been around Newfoundland and Labrador about the aquaculture versus the Atlantic salmon.

I'll just read a little note here, Mr. Speaker, it's from Neville Crabbe, he's with the Atlantic Salmon Federation. What he's saying is that they are not calling for an outright ban on aquaculture; that is not practical or reasonable. What we have to do, we have to do better.

Mr. Speaker, when the Member brought it in this House – he never brought it to me personally, brought it in the House to meet with NL-CAR. We've met with NL-CAR, a great meeting. They asked for two groups to be put on the committee. The two groups were put on the committee.

As Grieg had the meeting last night with experts in there, three other satellite stations, Mr. Speaker, they also – and I can name the groups that they are meeting with personally this week to go through every concern that every group has in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

That's good news indeed. Mr. Speaker, last night many, many people did not get an opportunity to ask questions. Two hours is not enough for Grieg to hold these public consultations for their very important project.

I ask the Premier: Will he urge and encourage Grieg NL to hold more public sessions so people's questions can be asked and answered?

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

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

I just mentioned about the meeting they had last night in Marystown, and there were three satellite stations –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** 300 people.

**MR. JOYCE:** 300 people – also, Mr. Speaker, with opportunity for people from other satellite stations to ask questions on it. She forgets to mention that.

This week Grieg, on their own, are going to be meeting with the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the Newfoundland Salmonid Council, Newfoundland Coalition for Aquaculture Reform, Fish, Food and Allied Workers. We know they all wanted to meet with Grieg.

I ask the Member, what's your position on it? Should we have aquaculture in this province? Should there be aquaculture in Marystown? Why don't you state your position on it because we know what you're against? Every time you stand up you're against. Tell us if you're for this or not, and if you do, let's go have a public meeting in Marystown and ask the people in Marystown what they want.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The time for Oral Questions has ended.

If I may, I would like to address a point of order that was raised this morning by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. I have had an opportunity to review the video of the earlier exchange this morning. I believe that the disagreement is a disagreement between two Members; therefore, while I would ask that all Members be temperate towards each other, I would state that there is no point of order.

Thank you very much.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### **Petitions**

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

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

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

WHEREAS a year has passed since the tragic event of January 17, 2017 where our school was completely destroyed; and

WHEREAS we have 250 people in a building which is only equipped to handle 150; and

WHEREAS we do not have a science lab, library/resource room, cafeteria, computer room, student support suite, no wheelchair accessibility washrooms, no multipurpose room; and

WHEREAS we have classrooms which require co-programming but this cannot happen because of space issues in the building; and

WHEREAS government has a legal responsibility to ensure our students have access to the best education;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to commit to a new state-of-the-art K to 12 school for the students of Bay d'Espoir, announce funding in the 2018-2019 to begin the design and tender process and we would like for the construction to be expedited.

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

Mr. Speaker, you can see this is a sizable petition. I still don't have the full submission. I

have kept some in the event that we get bad news next week but we're very optimistic that we won't get bad news because we do believe that government recognizes it must act in the best interests of the children.

Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago we lost the opportunity to get a new school and we cannot allow that to happen again. Our children deserve a new school, a brick structure that is non-flammable that is safe for the children.

The school board has requested a new school. The school council has requested a new school. The board of directors of the school board have certainly made a motion for a new school. The municipalities have requested a new school.

I, as the Member for the region, support the parents, the children and the teachers in their quest for a new school. Anything other than a new school will be totally unacceptable. These children need to move beyond the nightmare that happened last year. They deserve a new school; they haven't had one in over 60 years. First and foremost, the children must take precedence over penny pinching, over politics, over anything. The children need a new school.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further petitions?

### **Orders of the Day**

#### **Private Members' Day**

**MR. SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, I now call on the Member for Cape St. Francis to introduce the resolution standing in his name.

Motion 1.

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

Again, it's indeed a pleasure to get up here today to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

I'm moving the following private Member's resolution, and it's seconded by my colleague from Ferryland.

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urges the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to consider eliminating the sales tax on insurance.

Before I start, I want to recognize some people in the gallery today and say that I know it concerns them. I spoke to a group of taxicab drivers last week and it is a major concern they have, along with many people of this province and businesses right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, in 2016 the Liberal government came down with a budget that basically affected every province, and budgets do – affected everybody in this province, but in a way that nobody saw. They introduced 300 new fees – not new fees, they introduced an increase in 300 fees and they introduced 50 of them which were new ones to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador because they needed revenue.

Mr. Speaker, other provinces at the same time needed revenue also. Alberta and Saskatchewan faced the same thing as Newfoundland and Labrador. While we'll all talk about the reason for this, or throwing blame here or throwing blame across and saying whose fault it was, the actual truth to it all was that oil prices were up over \$100 a barrel and all of a sudden, over a very short period of time, it dropped down to around in the mid-\$20s. That had a huge effect on our province.

What did Saskatchewan and Alberta do at that time? They went and fought their federal counterparts in the federal government and said: listen, you have to change, this is a drastic change to our province. Our revenues aren't coming in like they were because of what happens to oil prices. Our province is huge. One dollar is basically worth \$29 million of revenue a year to our province and to our coffers, and that's huge.

Did we fight? No, we didn't. Did we go up and say equalization's not fair? No, we didn't do it. But, Mr. Speaker, it's our constitutional right. In the Constitution of Canada it states that all Canadians should have the same equivalent

taxes. We should be paying the same taxes. There's no way that one part of Canada should be getting a relief while other people have to pay so much taxes.

That's what's happening here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't know, for some reason or another across the way they don't seem to want to fight for that, but you know – and the comment was, it is what it is. That's what the comment was, it is what it is and we can't do anything about it. So less tax –

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Who made the comment? Your Premier, yes.

Okay, it is what it is, so let's not do a thing about it. That's what you're saying. Let's do nothing about it. Let's tax the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, let them pay for it. Put it on the backs of every hard-working Newfoundlander and Labradorian, every small business in this province. That's what it is. It is what it is. So let's get the money from them. Instead of fighting with Ottawa, like you should have done.

Mr. Speaker, they raised taxes on gasoline, retail sales tax, books and personal income tax. They even taxed people a levy. They taxed companies who also passes – when a company gets a tax or has an added expense, what do they do? They pass it on down to the consumer, which is every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

Mr. Speaker, then they came with the tax on insurance. We pay way too much insurance in this province, and there's no doubt about it. Both sides of this House agree that we pay way too much insurance rates, and there is a review on the way. I hope the review comes and we can bring that cost down.

Do you know what? On their review they were wondering why insurance is so high in our province. Do you know what? The 15 per cent makes it pretty high too. I'm sure every backbencher over there, and even Cabinet ministers and everyone else, when they talk to people in their districts and when they talk about taxes and when they talk about anything else, the

one thing that everyone will talk to them about is the tax on insurance.

I have a neighbour next to me, and we have – a great man, a fantastic gentleman. He goes in the woods, at 82 years old, every day and cuts a load of wood and brings it out. What a great fellow, and his concern is taxes.

We have to look at ordinary Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and understand that most people live from payday to payday. That's just the reality of what it's all about. When you have a tax on your insurance, everyone knows – if you're payday to payday, you have your monthly payment and one of your monthly payments is your insurance rate. That's what you pay, so you allot so much money.

What this government did, the money that was allotted, they put 15 per cent on top of it. It's not like a gasoline tax where you decide, okay, I'll slow down on driving my car, I won't go as far. That's something they have to pay all the time. Do you know what? It crushed people. It really, really hurt people and it caused hardship.

What it's done to our economy, I mean you talk about doom and gloom. No, we're not talking about doom and gloom. We're talking about taxation. The burden that you put on people, and people are upset over it. That's what the burden is all about.

This decision wasn't just done by the former minister of Finance. Listen, when you make a budgetary decision, I would assume the minister who's brining in the budget brings down and it comes to Cabinet. The Premier and everybody in that Cabinet has to make that decision on the budget. I know sometimes they want to throw people under the bus.

Do you know what? That's a joint decision that was made right across the board, these 300 taxes and extra fees that were there. That's it, people spoke out. I know, and we all know, we did a filibuster here in the House of Assembly when the budget came down the last time. I don't know how many hours we spoke. I know there were a lot who went and reviewed it and saw how many times, and there was just so much there that you couldn't really see what it had.

People posted signs on the parkway. Local media, the *Open Line* shows, everything, editorials in *The Telegram* were all about too much taxes. People out there spoke but the Liberal government across the way didn't listen, and are not listening. They're just not listening to the people of this province.

We have business owners in this province that are finding it very difficult. Go in around the mall, go in on Kenmount Road, go over in Churchill Square, go down on Water Street, and that's just in this area. I'm sure in other districts they're finding the same thing. We have a lot of businesses that are struggling.

I read something this morning that I got, and I know every Member received it. It was from Vaughn Hammond, who's the chair for small business organizations in this province. He says retail sales tax is going to cost \$40 million a year to small businesses. These taxicab drivers who are here today listening to this debate and some that are listening to it at home, they're small business people. They're struggling. You talk to small business people in this province and they'll tell you the tax on insurance is costing a lot of money. It's not something that you can say I'll slow down on doing something; it's not something that you can say I'm not going to have it, because it's against the law.

We listen to, every morning, the news; someone got picked up last night and X number of fines, no insurance on their vehicles. You should have insurance on your vehicles, you should have insurance on your homes, but sometimes you just can't afford it. The people can't afford to do it. It's very unfortunate. It's so unfortunate that people happen to go that way, but it's not right. We need to make sure that everybody is protected.

Mr. Speaker, our small businesses say they're paying \$40 million a year. What happens to a small business when it gets an added cost to it? What do they do? They have to lay off people. They have to reduce services to people. Jobs are a major factor in what's happening with small business today.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals out there like the gentleman I spoke about – I don't want doom and gloom. No, I want this province to be as

bright and prosperous as it possibly can, but the reality is the taxes that are added to the people of this province are not causing it. It's not an optimistic province when people see what they have to pay out.

Mr. Speaker, I speak to people every day that are losing jobs. I spoke to a gentleman this morning that told me he's an electrician. He was wondering if I knew where to get a job. He said: Kevin, I will do anything because the economy is not what it was. He had no problem six or seven years ago. There were megaprojects on the go. We all understand that. That's just the time, the way it is. He said I'm going to have no other solution but to do – he said I'm going to go away; I'll keep my family here. Like I said, it's lost incomes, loss of homes.

You don't need to be a rocket scientist to figure out why people are leaving the province or why people are not coming here to stay in the province. We don't need to spend \$22,800 of what this government put out to the ex-patriots wondering why they won't come home. Can I tell you why? I can tell you why for nothing. Our taxes are too high. It's too expensive here to live. Average people can't afford to live in the province.

We're the only province in Canada – other than Saskatchewan; they have a government-based insurance rate. But other than that, no other province pays for insurance other than Newfoundland and Labrador. You just have to look at reality and the reality is the right thing to do with this insurance is to eliminate it. People will spend the money.

I listened to the Minister of Finance talk about severance and he's going to put out \$600 million. Now, we're not really sure, obviously, that's going to go up because he couldn't answer the questions from the Members today. He couldn't answer the questions yesterday or the day before either. Anyway, the money that people get, he's hoping they're going to go and spend it and that will help generate some activity in our economic climate that we're feeling here today.

Mr. Speaker, I'll give you an example. I was in to Honda just last week and I was speaking to a friend of mine in there. We were talking about

the \$60 million that was won by the iron workers out around Come By Chance. He said: It saved our month because what happened was we sold 10 so far and it's looking like we're going to sell a few more cars because the money was put back into the economy and people started spending money.

Government has to realize that when people don't have money, they can't spend it; but when people do have some money, if they're not nickel-and-diming, they will spend their money. It will generate people to work. It'll help jobs. It'll hopefully give us some optimism about what's happening in society today. Those are just basic facts, Mr. Speaker.

Like I said, my motion today – and I'm hoping that people over there, especially the backbenchers on the other side, because I know you listen to the people in your districts. I know that the people in your districts have been spoken to about that tax. I know that everyone in the district have spoken about the burden that the insurance tax has put on people in your district. I know you've spoken to taxicab drivers. I know you've spoken to small business people all over the province. It is a burden.

The tax on insurance is not a luxury tax. It's not a luxury to have taxes on insurance. That's not a luxury. Now, I thought they may bring in something on soda or fast foods, or sugar tax or something like that because something like that would make sense because those things are not a burden.

When we tax on insurance and we talked about – I know the Minister of Health talks about it all the time: healthy results. In order for us to get the cost of our health care system down, we need to be healthier people ourselves. I know, Minister, you will agree with me on that one. In order to be able to bring down the cost of health, people need to be able to spend a few dollars. They need to be able to go and buy fruits and vegetables. They need to be able to get a gym membership and be more active. But when you're down to very pennies that you have left to spend, people realize I can't afford to do this. All that stuff will generate.

The insurance tax is a burden on every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. Whether

you're an individual, whether you're a small business owner, whoever you are, it's a burden on the people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all the Members in this House of Assembly to think about it, to think about their neighbours, to think about the businesses that are around and think about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that want to put money back in our economy, because I know we spend. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, they do buy new cars and they will generate – the more money they have in their pocket, they will spend.

I believe that if we eliminate this tax, it will be good for small business; it will be good for every individual and every home in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise again today and speak to this motion. In a way it feels like Groundhog Day or the movie *Groundhog Day* because I think it was the same Member got up and said more or less exactly the same thing about the Deficit Reduction Levy about a year ago. Pretty well the same Member, he had basically the same speech.

Taxes, Mr. Speaker, who likes them? Benjamin Franklin said one time: There are only two things that are certain in life: death and taxes. I don't like either one of them. But the fact of the matter is the one thing the Member, as he grandstands over there and tries to tell our Members what it is they're hearing from their constituents, is that tax reductions are spending. If you're in a position like we're in, a hole that was dug so deep, you couldn't have made a bigger mess if you weren't deliberately trying to sabotage this province – a hole that was dug this deep, you would think, Mr. Speaker, that if you rise in this hon. House of Assembly and offer to spend money on tax reductions, that you at least provide an alternative.

Talk about solutions. Now, I'll tell the Member because I spend a lot of time in my district because I basically am here all the time; it's just across the road. I'll tell the Member what I hear from my constituents when I'm out and about, because he says he knows what our constituents say to us. My constituents say to me – here's what they say: Muskrat Falls, oh my God, what were they thinking? We were clearly misled.

Some people say to me that as far as they're concerned they were lied to. That's what people say to me. People also say to me what a mess you crowd got to deal with now. Please God, you'll get it sorted out. That's the second thing people say.

The other thing that people say, particularly those people who watch the proceedings of the House of Assembly at home or come into the galleries and watch the proceedings, they say: I can't believe they can get up there in the Opposition and say that with a straight face; they can get up there and simultaneously take no responsibility for anything they did for 12 years in office and then blame us. They feign ignorance and then they are all offended if anybody points a finger at them.

History will remember, Mr. Speaker. They had \$25 billion in combined tax, oil, mineral royalties, revenues over the course of the 12 precious years they spent in office, starting with Danny Williams first being elected. They had \$25 billion and I think they struggled to balance the budget more than a couple of times. They could barely produce a balanced budget. Every year things just went up and up and up and up.

I remember the hon. Government House Leader got up one day and said, it's like my son went into his bedroom and made a mess, then he's standing there saying: dad, you're holding the mop wrong, hold the mop right and clean up my mess. Dad, use the mop faster and clean up my mess; you're cleaning up my mess wrong; clean up my mess. That's the message we hear in this House of Assembly day after day after day. You clean up our mess better and faster and without any consequences to the good people of this province.

I know people are under strain. I'd like to get rid of every tax. I absolutely would, but I would not



get up on the floor of this House of Assembly and start proposing measures for which I have no solution – absolutely.

I know how hard taxi drivers work in the city of St. John's and in other municipalities across this province. I went to university with many taxi drivers, and some of the taxi drivers I went to university with are still driving taxi. I know there are young men and women out there who come here from outside of the province and they're driving a taxi just to get through school. There are people who have families to support, who have driven cabs for dozens of years and they're struggling.

We took the temporary gas tax off. That was something that was burdening people, whether you're driving a cab or driving a car to get around yourself. It was a temporary tax and we took it off.

When the fiscal situation of this province improves, we can make further changes. It is already legislated that the Deficit Reduction Levy will come off. That is legislated to come off. We're trying to clean up this mess as fast as we can. We're trying to sweep the mop as fast as we can, but it is a challenge.

In the 2015 budget, the one preceding our election to government, the former premier of the province, the now Leader of the PC Party Opposition, swore up and down – he was asked numerous times, time after time after time after time he was asked: What is the budget deficit situation? No more than \$1.1 billion.

In the fall of 2015, going into the election, they had not released the Public Accounts, the true statement of the financial affairs of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The then Leader of the Liberal Opposition, the now Premier, wrote to the then Premier, the PC premier, and he said: What is the fiscal situation? That letter has still not been answered. No response was forthcoming.

In fact, the former minister of Finance she, with as far as I'm concerned great care and consideration for our economy, counselled the Premier to try and find a way to make sure that we could continue to pay public servant salaries because we were that close. We were so close

when we first were elected in December of 2015 to not being able to make payroll.

Anybody who has their own small business or medium-sized business knows the impact of that. Not only are you in a very difficult position yourself, but you're about to put everybody else in a very difficult position. It's only very recently that government has disclosed to the public that we were that close to the precipice, but that is where we were – where we are.

The other thing about it, I sat over there on the other side of the House and we argued against Muskrat Falls. We said don't take all that money and gamble it on oil, but no one listened over there. Basically, the law of the land provided assurances that the Public Utilities Board would be able to review Muskrat Falls before shovelling all that money on top of it, and they didn't listen. They rammed the bill through the House of Assembly.

I'll never forget the night, because when I got elected to the House of Assembly my son had basically just been born earlier that year. I remember my son wasn't quite – he was 2½ years old. I was sitting over there and I remember – the Member's opposite will remember because I will never forget – basically them saying, we'll stay in here over Christmas if you don't vote in favour in of this. If you don't stop the filibuster we'll keep you in here through Christmas. Saying to me and the hon. Government House Leader, also with small children, those of us with families, we'll keep you in over Christmas if you don't vote for Muskrat Falls.

That's the sort of stuff that was held over our heads. You can go back and look at *Hansard*, the record of the day. Those are the sort of threats that were made to me and other Members of the Opposition, of taking Christmas away from our families if we didn't vote for this phoney project in Muskrat Falls.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Absolutely.

Here we had a situation where oil was trading as high as \$115 a barrel in June 2014. They said that was going to continue. Oil was going to stay

somewhere around \$80 a barrel for 25 years. No one agreed with that. Oil went down to as low as \$45 US in January 2015, and we can go online now and see where it is. It's not at no \$80; yet, we put those funds, those billions of dollars into Muskrat Falls so recklessly. Let me rephrase that, Mr. Speaker, they did that so recklessly.

Then we had the we-got-it moment with Danny Williams coming down over the escalator in the airport, basically saying we got \$2 billion. No one told the people of the province that we didn't just get \$2 billion; that they basically changed the terms of the agreement that we had with the federal government under the Atlantic Accord in order to get that money more quickly.

So we got the money we were going to get anyway. We just got it all in one cheque so one man could walk down over one elevator in the airport up the road to hoodwink all of us here in the House of Assembly.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** That's what has happened.

I could go on and on about this situation but as I said, no one, as far as I'm concerned, goes to work every day, works hard, regardless of what their profession is, and says: I can't wait to pay my taxes on my insurance, my gas, my income, sales and so on. I don't think there's anybody out there who can't wait for that moment to do that, but it's something we have to do to support the economy, the education system, the health care system and those in our society who are left behind. That is our collective responsibility.

If the Member was entirely sincere about this motion he would stand up and tell us how we would pay for the loss of funds that would result from his proposal, but we haven't heard any of that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to enter in an amendment. It is as follows, and I'll provide this to – I think it's been provided to the Law Clerk.

I move, seconded by the Member for – Bay of Islands is not here, he's going to be present in the Chamber – by the hon. Government House Leader, that the resolution be amended by deleting the following words: eliminating the

sales tax on insurance, and substituting the following: the results of the independent tax review in determining whether to reduce or eliminate the sales tax on insurance when the province's finances recover from the previous mismanagement.

**MR. SPEAKER:** We'll take a recess to examine the amendment and return in a few minutes.

### Recess

**MR. SPEAKER:** Is the Government House Leader ready?

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes.

**MR. SPEAKER:** We've reviewed the amendment and found it to be in order.

The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

Just to continue the few minutes that I have left on the clock, just sort of to motivate this motion because I don't think I have done it to the full effect. The government has committed to carrying out an independent tax review. That's something that was committed to in the election campaign that was started and is in process. The ball is rolling, so to speak, on that process.

That's something that's necessary, a very structured and a rational way to do this, rather than using this Private Members' Day as a way to grandstand and lecture the government without providing any sort of solution to the problem at hand which, in the Member's mind, is the tax on insurance. A tax that I might add, Mr. Speaker, was in place for a couple of decades and was only removed by the previous administration when there was some \$25 billion available to the Treasury over the course of those 12 years. There is a good possibility that an independent tax review, coupled with our ability to climb out of the hole that we were thrust into by the previous administration, there may be some allowance for that.

I think the other thing that is very important not to forget here is the coming Tory tax on

electricity. We're also going to have an additional tax on electricity associated with Muskrat Falls. Let's not forget, because of the underestimation of the cost of that project, in 2012 we were told that project would cost some \$6.2 billion, with \$5 billion of that coming from a federal loan guarantee. But in the end, once we finally got Nalcor under control and got someone over there to have a thorough examination of the damage that the previous administration had done, we realized that it was many more billions of dollars –

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

**MR. KIRBY:** – that the previous government has shovelled into the dam up at Muskrat Falls.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to get up and speak on this important matter. I guess it's unfortunate that government decided to bring in an amendment and turn an important issue into something for their own choice of words, their own way of recreating a very important topic of getting rid of this insurance tax and turning it into a political play.

That's fine, Mr. Speaker. I talk to people in this province. I talk to people in my district on a daily basis. We all do. We hear from them; 2019 is when the verdict will come in on their behaviour, so I guess we'll just all wait and see. I'm looking forward to it, Mr. Speaker, and I think a lot of people in this province are, the sooner the better.

Three years in and blame, blame, blame, blame; \$25 billion wasted, \$25 billion wasted is all we hear. No one talks about the new schools, the roads, the improvements in health care. I used to have a list of stuff and I know the Members opposite used to really get upset over it when you start listing off all the things we spent money on. It used to get them right agitated.

The one thing that's always lost on this government, Mr. Speaker, they like to blame the former administration – the third year in, I think it's time to get past that. What about the people? We say it and I keep saying it and I'll always keep saying it, and if anyone wants to check the *Hansard*, every opportunity that I've ever stood in this House since the 2016 budget, I speak about the insurance tax. The effect the insurance tax is having on individual families in this province, not the rich families, the working class, the middle class, the people that struggle, the people with two and three children in their household, Mr. Speaker. You got a house to insure, you got a vehicle, sometimes you have to have two vehicles in this society – I know out in CBS we need to have two vehicles. You have children starting to drive. It's a huge burden on most families, Mr. Speaker.

Insurance is not cheap. We know there's an insurance review going on and we welcome the results of that review. Right now, here and today, people struggle with this insurance tax. We've seen it on the news. The taxi industry have been in an uproar over it, and we all watched that. We understand that and there's a review on the go. But they're struggling right now; small businesses are struggling.

As my colleague from Cape St. Francis said earlier, we all got an email today from Vaughn Hammond – I don't have to repeat what's in that. I'll say this, they make swipes at us; they're not party affiliated. They speak about issues. They have come at us just like they've come at the current administration. They speak out for business, and that's their job. That's their group. That's what they do, and I respect that. But for some reason this government opposite refuse to listen to any criticism about stuff they've done, because it's always our fault. It's what the PCs done because you wasted money. It's what you did with the money.

Then the Minister of Education gets up and he talks about: We got it. Danny Williams coming down over the elevator: We got it. I'll tell you what. Forget about what portion of it we got upfront or where we got the money, he came back with \$2 billion. Do you know that told me, Mr. Speaker? He had the courage and the guts to go fight with Ottawa.

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

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

**MR. PETTEN:** He never just stood back and said: Thank you, whatever you're going to give me, Mr. Trudeau. He had the guts to go up and fight with him. People in this province stood with him when he did that because that's what we're all about. Not this: Whatever you're going to give me, okay, thank you, Sir. Okay, very good. They're not listening to the people, Mr. Speaker. They're not listening to the people.

We got up a couple of weeks back and we talked about carbon tax. Go poll the people in the province and ask if they want another tax. Whether they understand carbon tax or not, ask them do they want another tax. Do they want to pay more money? I don't think I'd have to guess what the results of that poll would be. We all know the results. No, the federal government are coming out with a carbon tax; we can't disagree with them. No, that's a no-no. We can't disagree with our federal cousins.

The list goes on right across the board, Mr. Speaker, with anything that is associated – they will not go fight. It's whatever you're going to give us, whatever we're welcome to, thank you very much and walk away. It's not a bad thing to stand up and fight for your people. They're the people who put you in power. They're the people you should be fighting for. Justin Trudeau didn't put this government in power, the people of this province did, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. PETTEN:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs came in to grace us with his virtues. I guess we're going to hear more later on; I can't wait. I'm sure most of the people in the province can't wait. I should share some of the notes I get.

Mr. Speaker, a few others things, we talked about the working middle class. Every individual household is suffering under this insurance tax – every household. It's more than the taxi industry. It's more than business community. They are too. Every single person in

this province feels the burden of this insurance tax.

We need insurance. In today's world – in the class-action, lawsuit world – you can't go around without insurance, even though a lot of drivers tend to go around –

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

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

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

I hope they're all getting up and speak instead of chirping. It's great to sit and chirp. It's great.

People care about this issue, Mr. Speaker. They may not, but we do and a lot of people in this province do and I'm sure a lot of people viewing this today do. They can laugh; they find it funny and that's fine. I know that irritates them when you call them out for it, but it is – they're over there laughing and that's fine. The people will make a decision next year. In 2019, they'll make their decision then and I'm sure they'll speak loud and clear.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it's about people. It's about me and you, it's about our children. When we say insurance tax – the Minister of Education got up and I don't think he mentioned one word about insurance tax. People want to hear what his view is. We're hoping someone else will get up and speak.

Then he got up and added an amendment that makes this PMR very, very difficult for us to support now based on what the wording it's changed to. They missed the point, Mr. Speaker, and this is something that this administration has failed to do since they've been elected.

I heard this morning the doom and gloom, doom and gloom. I heard it today in speaking this morning. The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills was up giving us a lecture on personal income tax rates across Atlantic Canada and how we're doom and gloom.

It was this administration, Mr. Speaker, it was this Premier, this former Finance minister who sat down on December 18, 2015, and drew a cloud over this province that's never been lifted.

People have said that to me. People remember the date, I do too. People have been nervous of spending ever since.

The blame game, it's time for it to move on. It's three years, Mr. Speaker. This administration get up and they'll talk about spending. They won't talk about revenue. The revenue has increased. They won't cut their spending, no, no. Everyone says you have a spending problem. They criticized us for spending. This government is doing the exact same thing.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Spending more.

**MR. PETTEN:** You're spending more than us. The pot is calling the kettle black. You can't suck and blow at the one time, Mr. Speaker. You can't do both. That's two simple words, you can't suck and you can't blow at the same time. I'd like anyone in this House to try it because you can't do it.

You can't overspend and then accuse the previous administration of over spending. It just don't add up, Mr. Speaker. I sit and listen to this stuff going on back and forth, back and forth, and for the most part you kind of laugh about it to a degree because it is humorous to me. The public found this funny too. I always go back to the public because I think that's something that is very important as elected officials and I think a lot of us do it.

Just go back and talk to people in your district. Let's see what they think. Talk to the seniors, talk to the struggling middle-class families. Talk to them, they'll tell you. I don't have to recreate one word I'm saying here today. They'll tell me, most of this stuff is told to me in a coffee shop, down in your office or running to the supermarket. It's a conversation.

I'll say this every time I get up because I'm not creating this. This is not something I created; it's something everyone is aware of. Everyone brings it up to you on a daily basis. Most people are very frustrated, and they're frustrated by the fact of what I just said earlier. Nobody on this side of the House appears to be listening to him.

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

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker (inaudible).

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, there is no acknowledgement here that any unparliamentary language was used by the Member for Conception Bay South.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'm not sure what the hon. Member is speaking of in particular. I was listening intently to the –

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker –

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I think, just to clarify, the point of order brought up by the Member, the term that she's saying is unparliamentary, the Member opposite said you can't suck and blow at the same time, which I would suggest might be unparliamentary.

We don't want to use it, but we would like a ruling on whether that term is unparliamentary, or the Member opposite can retract and apologize for making the comment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I won't take a recess right now. I'll take this matter under consideration and I'll review what was said and make a ruling on this at a later point. So, no recess.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**MR. PETTEN:** Interesting, interesting, Mr. Speaker.

In my final minutes – I know he ate a couple of minutes up there at that, that's fine. The Liberals like to blame. Like I said, people laugh at them. Doom and gloom. They create panic, we're going bankrupt. No, we're not going bankrupt anymore now, that's the new line. For a while they had everyone convinced we're going bankrupt, because that was the reasoning.

As you get past the mid-way point, now you're on the second half of your term, you have to try to sweeten the pot. Yesterday, when there was a response to the Speech from the Throne from

our leader, that's the big issue now. Because now they're trying to sweeten everything up. All of a sudden things are not so bad. We're not going bankrupt. Things are not as bad as we thought they were. What are you getting on with? The Opposition are all doom and gloom. Look what they've done.

You can see the punchline is changing, Mr. Speaker. As I said, you have to curtail your spending. Revenue has been spoken about many times. Revenue is there. Now, in the meantime, a lot of it's through taxes. We're trying to eliminate \$110 million of it through the insurance tax that people are suffering under. They've been told many times the revenue is not a problem, spending is their problem.

So I'll go back to it again, you can't blame us for something you're doing, probably more so. They're increasing spending. Look at your numbers. It's not something I'm creating, Mr. Speaker. They'll chirp and whatever. It's not something I'm creating, it's actually there. They're facts. Everyone knows this.

How they can say in 2015 we did not know. They were the only ones who didn't know. Everyone in the province knew we were faced with oil dropping, fiscal uncertainty. The 2014 budget, the last budget by this administration, laid out a five-year fiscal plan to get us back to stability. That wasn't created because we were doing wonderful. Everybody knew we were in a financial crisis – it was looming with the price of oil dropping.

Just how much it was? Well, that figure was really uncertain until later in the fall of the year. But every time you hear it, they didn't know. I'm wondering why they wouldn't have known. Everyone else in this province knew it except them? Something is not right here. Could they not read in the paper, not read in the news? Did they not listen to the budget? Did they not analyze the documents?

The HST was one of the things that was already announced in 2014 by the former administration to combat – as a start to deal with some of the financial issues. Then on the campaign trail, no, no, no, that's not right. That's a job killer. You can't do that. We'll eliminate that. That was the first campaign promise.

They all went up to Ottawa. They jammed up on a red sofa for a photo op with the prime minister. That was eliminated. Everyone was – oh yeah, there was going to be 13 beer in every dozen, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. PETTEN:** Oh yeah, the going was good. Everything was great. We got that done.

The minute they get back they realize we can't do this. We have to reverse this, but we can't do it until July which is going to cost us \$100 million in lost revenue. But no, no, it looked good when they were all on the sofa. I found it funny. I didn't know if they were going to leave enough room for the Premier. The prime minister was jammed in there; they were all piled on top of one another, but what a photo op.

I've yet to see the picture. I asked for this a couple of years ago and I never did see the picture, but it's out there somewhere. I'd love to get a copy of it. I really would. I think everyone would appreciate to see the picture. That was \$100 million picture, Mr. Speaker. The same cost as to get rid of this insurance tax, that's how much that picture cost, \$100 million.

In my last minute, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give some punch back to the Liberals and all this doom and gloom: number one, the Liberals are living in an ivory tower, that's the response; number two, they're wearing rose-coloured glasses; number three, they're out of touch with reality for struggling families; number four, they're in a bubble; number five, the emperor has no clothes; number six, let them eat cake; number seven, they're living a pampered life like their compatriots in Ottawa; and last but not least, Mr. Speaker, self-praise is better than no praise.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I had a speech prepared, but I'm telling you, after hearing the Member opposite, I'm going to put that aside because he wants us to know what was written in 2015, I'll tell you what was written in 2015 – in fact, I'll tell you what was written in 2012.

Our government has managed this resource revenue responsibly by balancing investment and debt reduction. Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the debt reduction was but the debt when that party took power versus the debt when that party left power was considerably different. And I don't mean lower, Mr. Speaker – I don't mean lower.

It is our government's goal to return to surplus in three years by 2015. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go to the 2015 budget document because the Member for Conception Bay South figures we're misleading people. We should refer to the budget document; everybody knew except for us. Well, Mr. Speaker, quoting from the budget document of 2015: "To be clear, Nalcor will bring long-term revenue to the province. In 2015-16 government will put an equity investment of \$760 million into Nalcor" primarily for Muskrat Falls.

It goes on to say: "Government's last equity injection in Nalcor will be in 2017-18." A total of \$3.1 billion will be invested in Nalcor. Well, I don't know, was that true? I don't know, Mr. Speaker. According to what we should have believed, because everybody knew it was only going to be \$3.1 billion invested in Nalcor – well, I'll tell you what, it's considerably higher than that.

Here's the next fact from their budget document of 2015, Mr. Speaker. Now, I'm glad you're sitting down. Nalcor contributes cash to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador annually, and over \$12 billion is expected to be returned to the province. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where that's coming from – I don't know where that's coming from, I honestly don't. But that's what we were told to believe. Now, pixie dust and fairy dust over there is what's been spread. I'm telling you what was in the 2015 budget document.

We'll go on a little further, Mr. Speaker. The investment in Nalcor will be fully refunded to

government within eight years – within eight years. I find it hard to believe that they think we couldn't have figured it out from this document what the truth was. We were only going based on what they told us.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what they told us in 2014-15, that the province's deficit was going to be a half a billion dollars. We found out that it was actually double that. In 2015, they told us it was doubled. But the document we were supposed to believe because everybody in the province was supposed to know the fiscal situation and reality of the province, in 2014-15 they told us there was going to a deficit of \$1 billion. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? When we came to power in December of 2015, we were told the truth by the Department of Finance. The projected deficit was \$2.7 billion, almost three times what the government told us.

Now, I can tell you that, in October, we said please give us a mid-year update; the people of the province deserve to know. No mid-year update in October. In November, please give us a mid-year update; the people of the province deserve to know. No mid-year update. Do you know there was no mid-year update, Mr. Speaker? Because the deficit wasn't \$1 billion, it was \$2.7 billion.

We should have known. The Member for Conception Bay South says we should have known that; everybody should have known. I'll tell you what else it said in the 2015 budget document, Mr. Speaker. Oil is going to increase by \$9 a barrel next year. I'll tell you what else it said: Oil is going to increase by \$9 a barrel the year after that.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, but the year after that oil was going to increase by \$4 a barrel, and the year after that it was going to increase by \$3 a barrel, and the year after that it was going to increase by \$3 a barrel again. Mr. Speaker, I find that hard to believe, but we were supposed to believe that budget document.

Mr. Speaker, there was a couple of other things in the budget document that I think are important for the people of the province to have some insight into. One of those is, right in their own document, it says that employment is going to continue to drop in the province over the next

year, and employment will continue to drop in the province the year after that – now, that part was true – and employment in the province will continue to drop the year after that. In fact, they projected that employment in the province was going to drop year after year after year. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they suggested that the gross domestic product was going to continue to drop between 2014-15 and 2019. They did get that right; they were a little bit off on the numbers.

Now, they'll look at us and tell us – keep in mind it's just over two years ago we formed government but we heard in a petition today that the roads in the province are terrible and it's all your fault. Mr. Speaker, if the roads in the province were absolutely fantastic in December of 2015, I don't know what they paved them with that they deteriorated to the point they did in two years.

Mr. Speaker, we need to look at the facts, the real facts. That's what we need to focus on. We need to focus on real facts.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** It's people.

**MR. OSBORNE:** I agree with the Member for Cape St. Francis, it is people but, Mr. Speaker, I haven't heard anybody on that side – in fact, I invited them, in all sincerity, to visit me in my office if they wanted to do it in private. I suggested they come because we hear them day after day where are you going to cut, what are you going to cut, but they won't tell us where to cut. They won't tell us what to cut.

They're hoping we will cut so they can stand and condemn us for doing it. The only thing they're telling us to cut are the revenue streams. They're not giving us any suggestions on how to cut expenses.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** I haven't heard one suggestion from any Member on the opposite side on how to cut expenses, but cut revenue, cut revenue, cut revenue, here's another way you should cut revenue. You're not listening to us, why don't you cut revenue? Why don't they tell us where we should cut expenses?

They'll stand day after day and say: Where are you going to find the efficiencies? How come you're not finding efficiencies? Mr. Speaker, we're all in this boat together. Everybody in this province has a stake in the financial situation the province is in.

I ask the Members opposite: Where do we find efficiencies? Don't just condemn. Don't just stand and condemn when we don't find them. If you're going to condemn us for not finding efficiencies, put forward some constructive ideas on where we find those efficiencies. What we have said, Mr. Speaker, is that as this province can afford to reduce taxes, we will. That's what we've said: As this province can afford to reduce the tax burden on the people of this province, we will.

I didn't like the taxes that were imposed in the 2016 budget, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you the Minister of Education didn't like the taxes imposed. I can tell you the Premier didn't like the taxes imposed. When the Department of Finance knocked on the Premier's door in December of 2015 and said: If you don't issue an emergency release of Treasury bills, you're not going to make payroll.

Now, that's pretty scary, Mr. Speaker. So yeah, drastic measures had to be taken. Nobody on this side of the Legislature enjoyed what had to be done. Nobody in their right mind would think they're going to win a popularity contest by increasing taxes, Mr. Speaker. Now, that's the fact. That's the truth of the matter. Nobody in their right mind would think they're going to win a popularity contest by increasing taxes. We didn't do it because we thought it was going to be fun. We didn't do it because we thought it was going to be popular. We did it so we could ensure we'd continued to make payroll.

Now, I can tell you what else we've done. We've reduced the deficit from \$2.7 billion, which is the real number projected in December of 2015. We reduced that down to \$2.2 billion and then down to \$1.8 billion. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's down to less than \$1 billion now. That's where we are now, down to less than \$1 billion.

They'd like to see it eliminated overnight, but the truth of the matter is even in the wealthiest,



wealthiest years of oil, the wealthiest decade this province had ever received, they had more deficits than they had surpluses. They had more deficits. They drove the debt up higher at the end of the day when they left office than what it was when they took office.

Mr. Speaker, when you have more deficits than you have surpluses – and they gripe and complain because we have a deficit. Well, their deficit was \$2.7 billion, and we keep lowering it and lowering it and lowering it and lowering it. Now, that, Mr. Speaker, is the truth.

What we've also done or the commitment we made to the people of the province was that as we lower the deficit and as we get the province back on track – and the province is not where it should be. We still have tough decisions to make. The fiscal situation of the province is still not pretty. The fiscal situation of the province still requires a great deal of work and a great deal of commitment to get it back to where it should be.

What we've done is told people that we will ease the tax burden on the people of the province as we get the deficit down, as we get back to surplus, as we get closer to surplus. We've made two reductions, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** As you get closer to an election.

**MR. OSBORNE:** The Member for Cape St. Francis is heckling and saying as you get closer to an election. Well, we're closer to an election today when you're asking us to eliminate a source of revenue than we were when we reduced the gas tax twice. We're closer to an election today than we were when we eliminated the tax on books.

Mr. Speaker, we've given a commitment that there are no new taxes or no new fees in this year's budget. We've also given a commitment that as we can eliminate taxes or reduce taxes, we will.

Now, I'm going to let the Members of the Opposition – I'm going to be honest, actually, because I'm always honest. I was going to say I'll let them in on a secret, but it's not a secret because they know, because they were in

government for a dozen years. The budget is complete. So you talk about politics, introducing a private Member's motion in the House of Assembly with less than two weeks to budget day, they know that that is pure politics because they know, just as we know, that the budget numbers are complete by now. The budget decisions are complete by now. That the Department of Finance need time to go through and do the fiscal forecast and the economic runs and everything else and the decisions are complete. They know that, Mr. Speaker. So it is pure politics.

If you want to be honest, it is pure politics that this is on the floor of the Legislature today. Whatever decision is going to be made on sales tax has already been made. Whether we keep it, whether we reduce it, whether we eliminate it, those decisions are already made. You talk about pure politics, Mr. Speaker, that's what this private Member's motion is. They know the difference. They know the decisions have already been made.

They know that they're supposed to be in three weeks ahead of the budget and then any tweaking you do, you do it in the week after that, and definitely two weeks before the budget, it's locked down, clamped down, it's put away to give the officials the opportunity to do the piece of work that they need to do, to get it to the Queen's Printer to be printed, to have it edited to make sure that there are no mistakes, to have the people go through it again and again to try to ensure that there are no mistakes.

So, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to be absolutely honest in this Legislature, if we're going to be absolutely honest, this private Member's motion is pure politics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm happy to speak this afternoon in response to the private Member's motion to eliminate the

HST on insurance. I'm sorry that we have to be still talking about this issue. We first talked about it, of course, in 2016 when that deadly budget was brought down here in this House and we were just shocked with the amount of taxes that were being put on people's shoulders.

At that time, of course, there was the so-called Deficit Reduction Levy, everything was Deficit Reduction. Then there was the 15 per cent tax on insurance premiums, which was 15 per cent because the HST was raised by this government.

It was very interesting that during the campaign in 2015 the Premier, when he was campaigning, said there definitely would not be an increase in HST. He called it a job killer and there definitely wouldn't be an increase. He becomes Premier, he turns around and all of a sudden the HST is up to 15 per cent. Then on top of that was the fact that the 15 per cent HST was put on a whole of new things, the serious one being the insurance that had to do with both property and casualty insurance policies.

Everybody knows that these are two areas where you have to have insurance, especially when it comes to the casualty. If you don't have insurance on your automobile, then you run into real problems. You have to have insurance. If somebody owns a property, owns a home, for example, it's not law that they have insurance, but they're in an awful way if they can't afford insurance and they have a fire, or they have a break-in, or they have other damages done to their home.

We're talking about something that is not life and death, but is essential to being part of our society, having insurance, and then having this tax on it which we talked about ad infinitum because the bill bringing it in – there were two bills that became the focus of the filibuster that went on for 75 hours, so we talked about all of this.

What really amuses me in a dark amusing way is the fact that this government last month was talking about we have to find out why people won't move back to the province. We have to find out why they're out there, why they're outside the province and what could bring them back. Well, I'll tell you having a tax like this on insurance is not something that's going to make

them want to come back to this province. It definitely is not.

Really, I am amused by the fact that this government has played this game of saying to people: Tell us what would bring you back. Well, living where I'm living, we have child care. Living where I'm living, we have home care as part of our health care system. Living where I'm living, we don't have any taxation on our insurance policies.

They're pretty powerful reasons for wanting to be somewhere else, and not wanting to be here. This government seems to be ignoring this. We know when the tax was applied the projected annual revenue was \$111 million. On some levels that's a lot of money, but when the Minister of Finance applauds the way in which the deficit is going down that's a choice they're making.

Not all governments in our situation make that choice. The federal government is not making that choice I know that; yet, they're making that choice. They're making that choice of reducing the deficit too quickly on the backs of the people of the province, on the backs of the middle-class people, on the backs of the ordinary people.

For the Minister of Finance to stand and talk about how different ministers in this room didn't like having the HST put on the insurance, I say back to the Minister of Finance, yes, but you know what? We could handle it, you could handle it and the ministers could handle it, but the people whose families have incomes of \$40,000 a year, they couldn't handle it, and they aren't handling it.

Seniors who are on fixed incomes but have to have insurance on their houses or have a car – and living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador probably have to have a car – they have to pay the insurance on their cars. These are the people who are being hurt. So it's very disingenuous of us, if we stand in this House of Assembly and talk about we didn't like it either. Yes, but we can handle it. Our finances can handle it, and we have to acknowledge that fact.

When this government is putting policies in place and doing the things they did, like imposing this tax and the fact that it existed

before – as the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development said, it had existed some years prior and had been removed. That's no reason for putting it back on. It should never have been there in the first place. When it was removed we should have maintained it because it's not a luxury. Having insurance is not a luxury. It's a necessity and we should not be taxing people on things that are necessities. We have so much tax in this province on things that are necessities, and this is one of them.

We know people were going to be hit with hundreds of dollars in taxes just because of this taxation. When you're on fixed income, when your income maybe as a senior citizen is \$20,000 annually and you still have a home and you still have to feed yourself, you still have to exist, that's not a lot of money, and they have to be putting out several hundred dollars more in taxation, that is something that is a real heavy burden on them.

This government prides itself – it seems to anyway – on doing things that hurt people and do it saying it doesn't seem to impact them at all; the impact that these kinds of levies and these kinds of taxes are having on average people. Not on people earning \$90,000 and \$100,000 a year, on average people.

I think it's important to note, as one of my colleagues in the Official Opposition noted, the message that was sent out today by Vaughn Hammond from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The point in there, and it's one I would have made, whether Vaughn Hammond had written his letter or not, is the impact also on small and medium enterprises, what we call small businesses. The impact on small and medium enterprises of this kind of a tax as well.

We say that small and medium business is the backbone of our economy; small and medium business in the retail sector; small and medium businesses in tourism; small and medium businesses in cultural ventures. They are the backbone, but they are being hit by this tax on insurance. So I find it really interesting that this government can see \$40 million going to companies – Canopy, for example, \$40 million or \$45 million to Grieg – that seems to be fine, but when it comes to the impact on small

businesses – the taxi drivers are small businesses.

When it comes to the impact on small businesses, no, that's not important. That's not important at all; yet, I've heard this government say they believe that small business is the backbone of our economy. Obviously, they don't believe it, because if they did believe it they wouldn't leave this tax in place.

I'm disturbed to think because of the amendment they've made, it's not just my thinking, they obviously are saying it. I'm disturbed by the fact that we cannot expect on March 27 to see a change in this tax. That's very disturbing.

Yes, I know we're having a review done of our insurance, but it doesn't take a review of – I mean our taxation system. It doesn't take a review of our taxation system to say we did something in 2016 that we shouldn't have done, let's undo it. That doesn't take a review of the taxation system.

The review of the taxation system is a much larger piece of work. It will look at the various areas of taxation. It will look at, I would hope, where we want to tax more heavily than other areas. It will look at that. This is a very particular tax, a punitive tax, put on by this government back only two years ago. It just takes an acknowledgement by them that they could slow down paying off the deficit and they could take something like this tax off. They could put large corporate tax up by a percentage point; they could do that as well.

There are choices that could be made right now to deal with the situation right now. They seem to have forgotten because time sort of makes this happen. They seem to have forgotten that people really were badly impacted by the 2016 budget and people are still impacted by it. People talk about it all the time.

Earlier today we had a minister's statement on Nutrition Month and dieticians talking about good nutrition. It takes money to have good nutrition. It takes money to have vegetables every day. It takes money to have fruit every day. It takes money for that.

When we have a tax like this one, a tax on something that's a necessity of life, where people have to pay this insurance and therefore they have to pay the tax – when we do that, then we're telling people we really don't care about your health. If we're impacting their ability to be consumers and to be consumers in areas which are necessities, like good nutrition – if we're impacting that then, no, we're not caring about their health. We're not caring about preventative health measures. We're not caring about their having a good healthy lifestyle and good food. We're not, because they can't afford it.

I don't know about others, but how often when I'm in the supermarket or smaller stores just buying my groceries, I think about the people. As I pick up an apple that's over a dollar, I think about people with families who maybe have a family income of \$40,000. They aren't eating that apple. They can't.

The same way when I pick up a banana or an orange, it's very hard to buy those things without – being in the field we're in where we think and worry about people, I find it hard to buy those items without thinking about the fact of the people who can't afford to buy those items, whose children will not have the best nutrition.

When this government is rushing the deficit reduction, rushing it because that's what they decided to do, when we see this government rushing that deficit reduction and doing it on the backs of the people of the province, it really upsets me. They gave in on some things. There was such an outcry in the province on the debt reduction levy that they made changes to that; didn't get totally rid of it, but they made changes to it. When it came to the closure of the school libraries, the outcry around that stopped them there too.

I have to wonder why the outcry around the tax on insurance didn't get viewed by them and get changed. I really don't understand it because of what I've pointed out, that it's an impact on people, ordinary people, on families because of money that's being taken away from them. It's also seriously impacting small and medium businesses. In particular, our taxi drivers are speaking out on that one.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy – I will be voting against the amendment, for sure, because this government doesn't need the review to know what they've done is wrong. Unfortunately, that means, of course, that the original motion will be defeated but I did support the original motion.

Thank you.

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

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

I'm just going to stand for a few minutes to speak on this motion today and the amendment that was made earlier. I hear all the comments made and a lot of good points being made on both sides of the House today. I know the Leader of the Third Party got all the answers, but I ask one question, just one question to the Leader of the Third Party: Where are you going to find the money? If you want the hospital beds open, where are you going to find the money?

**MS. MICHAEL:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. JOYCE:** I know she wants to heckle, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** I know she wants to heckle but, again, she can't come up with an answer to that.

When we came in, and people are saying oh, we're just passing the blame to the other group. It's not passing the blame, it's reality – it's reality. Mr. Speaker, do you think anybody on this side of the House wants to do any harm as the Leader of the Third Party is saying that we want to do harm to people? It's a sad, sad situation. It's a sad situation that they think we're going to try to do harm.

We got to look at the reality. In 2015, when we came into power, the reality was we had a tough decision. We had a tough budget to come up with. We had tough decisions. And part of that decision making because we were faced with a \$2.7 billion deficit, which I know some Members opposite said that everybody knew –

but everybody didn't know, I can assure you of that.

Mr. Speaker, so we made some tough decisions. The amendment that was made to it shows that as we become fiscally more capable of decreasing the fees, we will do it. Absolutely, we will do it. There's absolutely no doubt about it.

I hear about the insurance. I talk to a lot of cab drivers. I talk to a lot of ordinary citizens about it, Mr. Speaker. But there's one thing I don't shy away from is I explain to them why it had to be done. I'm not going to shy away and say oh well, it was somebody else who made the decision. I was part of the decision. But when you look back at all the information prior to – we can't count anything prior to 2015 because we'll be accused of blaming somebody else.

Mr. Speaker, 2015, there is someone that has to take the blame with \$25 billion wasted – wasted. I stood in this House many times, many times, that anybody in this House of Assembly, how many people when you get your paycheque put a bit away for the future? How many? How many put away for your kids' future? How many put away if you need repairs to your house? How many? Every person in this House, Mr. Speaker.

What did the previous government do when they were in power? As the Minister of Finance said, as soon as we get it, we'll spend it. That's the difference, Mr. Speaker. They didn't plan for the future. They didn't plan for a downturn in the oil. They didn't plan for the extra cost in Muskrat Falls. Because if they did, we would not be in this situation today. That is the difference.

I know all Members on this side of the House wish that we can do everything everybody wants in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but we just can't fiscally do it. If you can't do it, there are two ways to do it: to hide and put your head in the sand and say we don't have any problems and keep spending; or face the reality that we were faced with in 2015. That's what we did. We faced the reality.

Mr. Speaker, in between that, the Minister of Service NL has gone through the PUB and looked for a review of the insurance. The first

time in 12 years we did a review of the insurance of the province. Do you know the ironic part about that? We get criticism for putting a review through the PUB.

Guess what? Just think – and I'll say to the Members opposite who are over there now attentively listening to me, guess what, if anybody over there in the government at the time had the courage to put the Muskrat Falls Project to the PUB, we'd not be in this state today. That's the reality. They shut down the PUB. Mr. Speaker, when you hear statements about you can't talk about the past, we have to see where we were when decisions were made. We have made great progress.

Again, I'll say to the Leader of the Third Party, her comments were: All we wanted to do is hurt people. That was her comment. That's in *Hansard*. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one thing, if you really feel that all we want to do is hurt people, why don't you go down to Marystown as a responsible leader and have a public meeting and ask the people in Marystown what do they think about the Grieg project. Go down. You're the leader of a party in this province, go down and have a meeting.

That's the kind of statement you just throw at people that, oh, you don't care about people, Mr. Speaker. Everybody in this House, and I firmly believe this, are truly concerned about their constituents. There's no doubt about it. I will never say that the people here don't fight for their constituents. I know everybody in this House does. I know everybody has a different approach to everything. I understand all that and I would never criticize a Member here for standing up for their constituents. Absolutely, everybody does it in their own way and everybody in this House tries to make it a better place, but we have to face reality. You just can't make statements that we don't care about people or we're trying to hurt people because it's just not true.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the budget in 2015 I can get into the deficit, I can get into the money that was spent, but there's one question I would ask. I know the Member for Cape St. Francis very well. One question I would ask: What would you have done if you were faced with a \$2.7 billion deficit? Are you going to tell

me? I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis if you know what you would have done with a deficit of \$2.7 billion, why didn't you make sure we weren't in that position to have a \$2.75 billion deficit. Why don't you tell us why you didn't make the decisions for Muskrat Falls so we wouldn't be in that position? That's the concern we have.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Hoodwinked.

**MR. JOYCE:** Hoodwinked.

The Member for Mount Pearl – I think it's North or South, I'm not sure – Mount Pearl - Southlands, a Member of the PC caucus on record said his party hoodwinked him. That's the words. Now any time I use the word hoodwinked, that means someone gave me false information, and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands is agreeing with me.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you're in a corporation and you're making a decision and the people below you and around you gives you – as the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands says – wrong information, inaccurate information? Can you imagine if you're in a corporate boardroom and you made a decision based on information that was given to you, and you made a decision and it affected the people of Newfoundland and Labrador so much? It's shameful.

I have to give him credit for saying that, by the way.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It's criminal, not shameful.

**MR. JOYCE:** It would be. If you're in a boardroom and if you're on the stock exchange somehow, Mr. Speaker, there'd be a lot of questions asked by a lot of people.

When the Members opposite walk in and say: you're doing this wrong, you're doing that wrong, you should have done that. Your own Member at the time said you were hoodwinked.

That's what we were faced with. We were faced with \$700 million. We were faced with Muskrat Falls almost bankrupt going that way, because there was so much, so far behind. The price was

going up to \$10 billion, \$12 billion. We had to make some decisions, Mr. Speaker. The bond rating was saying what in the hell is going on here? The price of oil I think was up to \$82, that's what they put the price of oil at. I think it ended up at \$51, \$52.

Mr. Speaker, the easiest thing for us in the world to do today, the easiest thing for the government to do today is the Minister of Finance stand in his chair on budget day and say: we're going to put oil at \$104 a barrel, we're going to balance the books. But we all know it's not reality. We all know it's not reality, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is oil is not reaching \$80 a barrel; it's not reaching \$85 a barrel. Even if you look at Muskrat Falls, what it's supposed to be at today, it's not even realistic. It's just not realistic. I understand the concerns that people have in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. There are times when you have to say the decision was made because here's the situation we're in.

I can tell you what I did that Thursday night. I left this House after that budget, Mr. Speaker, and I went out and I faced the people in the district. I said, here – and I know every person here went out and said it. Here's what we had to do.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you one thing. We started making a plan. I look at the Members opposite also who are over there now listening to me very attentively. I'll ask the Members opposite, with the plans that we made with the federal government, how many of them over there are going to experience great work in their districts through capital works, through roads, through buildings, through fire halls, fire equipment? That's about making a plan.

Look at the roads program, Mr. Speaker. The first time – go down to Heavy Civil and ask them –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** The Mayor of Conche.

**MR. JOYCE:** The Mayor of Conche.

Go down to Heavy Civil and see the first time that they had such a great relationship with the people in government. They know what's coming out, when they can make a plan. That's

what this government is doing. We're not just saying: okay, we have to get elected this year, what do we have to do? We're going to say it doesn't matter. We have to be responsible in this House of Assembly. We have to be responsible to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it's going to take time. It's definitely going to take time.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, throughout Newfoundland and Labrador people are seeing a difference. We're gradually, gradually getting back. We have a plan that we're going to get back to a balanced budget. We also have a plan to build the infrastructure along, all along the way.

Mr. Speaker, I can say to the Members opposite, I can say to all the Members opposite and I'll ask any of them, what would you have done? If you were really concerned about not having to put any fees or any increases in, why did you let us get to the \$2.7 billion deficit? That's the question I need answered. Because if you walked in there, we had a balanced budget.

If we had a balanced budget in this House of Assembly when we walked in in 2015, and if we had just raised taxes so we could have a surplus, I'd say throw us out – but we were faced with a financial cliff. I have to say one thing here in this House of Assembly, I haven't heard one option yet, not one option yet of what to do. I can tell you one thing – and I don't criticize anybody for this.

I know the Members opposite are over there. I know the Leader of the Third Party is still chirping away. You can chirp away all you like, but I can tell the Leader of the Third Party, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to chirp, if you're going to be a leader, go down to Marystown and be a leader, because we're trying to expand the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're trying to go to all rural parts.

I know the Member, how much Crown land has opened up now for agriculture in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's the kind of stuff we're doing. Even the Member for Mount Pearl North was complaining that his government never did it for years. So we can increase the base.

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

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** He wants it now, though.

**MR. JOYCE:** He wants it now, he wants it now.

Mr. Speaker, it's easy to criticize, but to make the steps you need to make, the tough decisions is what we needed to do at the time.

So I'll say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we will eventually, as the finances improve we will make changes to the insurance. We will make changes to all the fees we put in place, the best we can, Mr. Speaker. Because I can tell you one thing, we're not going to do things just to get elected. We're going to make things that's going to be improvements for down the road, 10 or 15 years down the road.

A prime example is the agriculture one. Once we get that up and flying, agriculture is going to be for here to eternity. If we look at the capital works program we have with the federal government, that's going to be for the next 10 or 15 years that we have a plan in place, money put aside for that in place. If we look at rate mitigation for the high cost of electricity, we have money put in place for that. I can keep going on and on, the plans we're making for the future. We're making a plan, Mr. Speaker. We're making a plan for the future.

I can tell you one thing, there's one thing you won't do. There's one thing that won't happen – I'm sure I'm speaking on behalf of everybody in this House of Assembly. There's one thing you won't be able to do, not one Member here on this side is going to leave government and say I was hoodwinked by my own Members, because we'll be honest with you. We'll be upfront with you like we will with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We won't have the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – I have to give him courage for saying that, by the way. I would never have a Member, like the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands leave and say: why did you vote for Muskrat Falls? He said my own party

hoodwinked me. And you expect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to stand up and say we're going to believe you now, everything you're saying, after your own Member.

I challenge any Member that was in Cabinet over there, walk down there to the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and say: not true, you weren't hoodwinked. Here's your opportunity. I'll sit down and give up my time, Mr. Speaker.

Here's what I'll do, Mr. Speaker, I'll sit down –

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** If any of those Members over there wants to walk down to the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands or stand up and say he's not telling the truth, I'll sit down and take my seat, Mr. Speaker. That's what I'll do. Here's your opportunity.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I would like to rule on the earlier point of order that was raised by the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, I've reviewed the matter and there is no point of order.

I would ask the Member who moved the motion to please conclude the debate.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

I was just listening to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I'm going to challenge him to walk by now too and challenge the independent Member of the House of Assembly, who is now the Finance Minister of this province, who voted for Muskrat Falls. I'd ask you to go challenge him, if he was hoodwinked. He was an independent. There was no government here that challenged – that independent Member voted for it but, now, he's your Finance Minister. He made a bad mistake back then but we'll make him Finance Minister today.

I challenge you to go down and talk to him. Go on, you challenged us to do it; I challenge you to go down and ask him. As an independent Member he voted for Muskrat Falls.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, the chair of Nalcor at the time, who put out a website to encourage business across this province to support Muskrat Falls – she was the chair, former Finance minister of this province. She had a website out to let every business in this province know. Not the best. Another one, too, Minister, the Minister of AES, at the time of sanction he sat on the board.

Mr. Speaker, we heard it all afternoon. Hoodwinked was the word they used. The Member for Windsor Lake, you were hoodwinked. The minister, you were hoodwinked. The Finance Minister, you were hoodwinked too.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Some order, please!

Can I get some order?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Stand up, b'y, and be a man.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Let's have a little order here, please. We're almost done, let's just ride this out.

I recognize the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

Please conclude his remarks.

Thank you.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Point of order.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for a point of order.

Go ahead, Sir.



**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Cape St. Francis just said that a number of people here –

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I asked for order, please.

**MR. OSBORNE:** The Member for Cape St. Francis, Mr. Speaker, had indicated a number of people were hoodwinked. The point of order is we were, because we believed the numbers they put out.

**MR. SPEAKER:** No point of order.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I'll also remember and I'll remind that Minister of Finance that he voted for a number of budgets over a number of years. You were always hoodwinked.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** You're a minister and you voted for it. You can't talk out of both sides of your face, Minister. You cannot do it.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Anyway, I have that off my chest now, Mr. Speaker. I'll calm down a little tiny bit here.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the people that participated in this debate today. It was a good debate. I thought it was a good debate. I'm glad that I got a few people stirred up over there. That's good. It was a good debate. The reason that it was a good debate is because it's a hot topic that's in the province today. It's a very hot topic.

I'll thank the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. I'll thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'll thank the Minister of Finance. I'll thank my colleague from Quidi Vidi –

**MS. MICHAEL:** St. John's East.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Quidi Vidi - St. John's East, I always get that wrong because it is after changing the three years that I have been here. I'll also thank my colleague here from CBS.

There was some interesting comments made today but I think what people have to realize – and I know the Minister of Finance said it was a political, oh what a political game, but it's not. It's about what people are talking about. It's about what's affecting people in the province.

As elected officials in this House of Assembly, we're here to represent our people. We are here to represent our people.

**MR. KING:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yes, you are, the Member for Bonavista, you're here to represent the people in Bonavista, and you're here to listen to the people in Bonavista. That's your job.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** The people who elect us are our bosses. I always say that the people who elect us are our bosses. When their lives are affected by something that government does or something that's happening in the province, we got a responsibility to stand up and represent those people. That's the reason why this was brought in today.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs said: What would you have done? I'll tell you what I wouldn't have done. I wouldn't have brought in 300 new fees to what was already there – 50 new fees, 300 increases on things.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I wouldn't have done it. I wouldn't have tried to put everything on the backs of the people. I would have stretched it out a bit longer. I wouldn't try to make them pay for it today.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I wouldn't make them pay for it today.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Here's what I wouldn't do: I wouldn't make them leave. I wouldn't make them make a decision on what they're going to do, turn on their lights, or pay for groceries, or go pay their taxi. I'd make them be able to live responsibly, and that's what people want to hear in this province. That's what I would have done.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to three ministers today and this is a very important motion that we brought in on insurance tax. They never even spoke about insurance tax. They never, ever spoke about what effect it's having on the people, what effect it's having on – I gave an example today of a senior citizen, my friend; he gets his cheque every month and he can tell me where every cent goes, where every nickel goes, whether it's his insurance bill – not everybody – I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs got up and said everybody has an extra bit of money in their pockets who put away for savings. Boy, there are a lot of people in this province, a lot of people in your districts that don't have it, that live from payday to payday.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** When you put 15 per cent on their taxes, it puts a burden, it puts stress on people. It puts stress on them. This is what this is about today. This is asking for relief, for relief to people in the province, relief for people who elected every one of us. Here is what it is –

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** – what we're asking for, which was something plain and simple: Listen, give them a break; do the right thing. Listen to the people.

That's the problem we have over there. Three ministers got up here today and talked about everything except the people of this province,

the people who are being affected by this tax, the people who have to make decisions whether to stay here or not.

Listen, we're living in times where it's pretty difficult. We saw small businesses today come out and they said this tax is costing \$40 million. Who do you think is paying for the \$40 million if it's not the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? Small businesses.

We live in a society whether it's rural or it's in the St. John's area, or it's on the Avalon or it's on the Northern Peninsula, wherever it is, where small business – I'll tell you what small business is to Newfoundland and Labrador. It's the backbone of every community in rural Newfoundland and it's the backbone of St. John's besides.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** What's what going to do there, Minister?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Muskrat. What's Muskrat (inaudible)?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** What's Muskrat got to do – talk about the people, b'y. Talk about people in your own districts.

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

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Talk about senior citizens, right, who are trying to figure out how to pay their taxes. Talk about those people.

Listen, it was your budget – you go back to everything else, the budget in 2016 –

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Explain that.

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

I ask the hon. Member to address his remarks to the Speaker, please.

Thank you.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay, no problem.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to end it now pretty quick because my intention of this motion today was for this House of Assembly –

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, my intention with this motion today was to give the people of the province, the hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, whether they're small business, big business, whether they have children in school or whatever, to give them the break they deserve.

They're paying every day. This is the time – the Minister of Finance gets up and, basically, he told us it's not in the budget. There's no relief for anybody in the budget according to him because the budget's already done. I'll tell the Minister of Finance that the people in this province are finding it hard.

We're talking about people who we want to see more active, want to see people living a healthy lifestyle. How can you afford to live a healthy lifestyle when you have to determine how much money you got to spend?

We're in pretty hard shape in the province but people are getting around; people are doing okay. We have an economy that right now, hopefully, will start turning the tide and people will be able to do – like the minister said, he thought people have money to save, but they don't have money to save. We can't expect them to keep on paying. We've got to make a plan.

I laugh; I'll always remember a slogan that was used in the last election by the party across the way. They said: We have a plan and you're going to like it. But they didn't know what the plan was. They didn't know what the plan was. We have a plan and you're going to like it.

I really don't know what the plan was yet, and I don't think anybody does, but I can tell you right now, there are a lot of people in this province

that don't like it, don't like the plan, don't like to be taxed to death, don't like to be paying a tax to live here.

I'll just go back to the insurance tax again. I want to go back to the insurance tax again because, do you know, Mr. Speaker, the insurance tax is not a luxury tax. Sometimes we do have to bring in taxes, whether it's on cigarettes or alcohol or even we could have brought in a junk food tax; a sugar tax. There are all kinds of taxes that could have been brought in.

Maybe that's a solution for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, a sugar tax, maybe it should have been. It would be a lot better than an insurance tax. It would be a lot better than an insurance tax.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** It would be a lot better than an insurance tax because people can make a decision. Hopefully, it would be to give good choices. Hopefully, they'll make good choices in their lives, but the tax on insurance for that person who is home, knowing the monthly income that person has, is a tax that he has nothing to do about it. He can't do a thing.

Where do I come up with that money? I can't come up with it. I've have to cut what I eat. I've have to cut down my lights. I have to reduce this. I have to reduce that.

I really don't condone anybody out there driving without insurance, and please God, if anything happened to someone's home, there was a fire or anything like that, that hopefully that person would have insurance, but you know what? It's a reality of today that people have to make a serious decision of what they're doing.

I'm watching Members over across the way laughing, laughing. It's very, very funny that the seniors –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** I'm choking.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** You're choking, are you? I'm sorry that you're choking there, Sir.

You're probably choking because of what you're doing to the seniors of this province, people that are on fixed income. Is that the reason why you're choking?

Mr. Speaker, people in the province are making big decisions on how they live their lives. I just hope that this Liberal government gets a reality check and has a look and sees what they're doing to the people of the province. This was one way today to give them the relief that they deserve.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** After two years, since 2016, and doing what you did to the people in the province, today you had an opportunity. It's shameful. You're going to vote no to giving the people the relief they deserve.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Oh, you'll vote. Yeah, you're going to vote. I ask for an (inaudible).

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** We'll look at it down the road. That's what they're going to say, Mr. Speaker.

People in small communities and large communities of the province were hoping for relief today. Vaughn Hammond and the small business group were hoping for relief today. The cab drivers that were here today and the cab owners that were here today were looking for relief today. People in this province, all over this province, were looking for relief here today, but you wouldn't give it to them. You never gave it to them.

Mr. Speaker, again, it's all about the people of the province.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** It's all about who we're here to represent.

Thank you very much.

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

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

All those in favour of the amendment, please signal 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those against?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Division has been called.

I ask the Whips and the House Leaders to please call in their Members.

### Division

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

All those in favour of the amendment, please stand.

**CLERK (Barnes):** Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Warr, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Mr. Browne, Mr. Bragg, Ms. Haley, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Ms. Parsley, Mr. King, Mr. Dean, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Holloway.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those against the amendment, please stand.

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

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 25; the nays: 9.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I declare that the amendment has been carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**MR. SPEAKER:** In my opinion, the ayes have it.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Division has been called.

Please call in the Members.

### **Division**

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

All those in favour, please rise.

**CLERK:** Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Warr, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Mr. Browne, Mr. Bragg, Ms. Haley, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Ms. Parsley, Mr. King, Mr. Dean, Ms. Pam Parsons and Mr. Holloway.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 25; the nays; 9.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I declare the amended motion passed.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** It being Wednesday and in accordance with Standing Order 9, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock.