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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA*

Wednesday

March 28, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Admit strangers.

**Orders of the Day**

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

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

First from the Order Paper, I would move Motion 9. I would move, pursuant to Standing Order 8(8), that this House adjourn at 5 p.m. today, Wednesday, March 28 until Monday, April 16, 2018.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I would call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 2.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources that Bill 2, An Act To Amend The Electrical Power Control Act, 1994 And The Public Utilities Act be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Electrical Power Control Act, 1994 And The Public Utilities Act. (Bill 2)

**MR. SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Electrical Power Control Act, 1994 And The Public Utilities Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 2)

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would call Motion 4.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay. Proceed.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I would move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act, Bill 4, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act, Bill 4, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to introduce a bill, "An Act

To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act.” (Bill 4)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act. (Bill 4)

**MR. SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 4 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I call Motion 5.

I would move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for Natural Resources, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Pension Benefits Act, 1997, Bill 5, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Pension Benefits Act, 1997, Bill 5, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Service NL to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Pension Benefits Act, 1997.” (Bill 5)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Pension Benefits Act, 1997. (Bill 5)

**MR. SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 5 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper Motion 1, the Budget Speech.

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

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

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

It’s a privilege to rise today to respond to the budget presented yesterday. This is the third budget of the current administration in their mandate after being elected in the fall of 2015.

The budget presented this year was presented by a new Minister of Finance, new in terms of the executive and the government on the other side. The first two were presented by the prior Finance Minister, and I’m looking forward today to sharing some commentary on what we heard yesterday.

In any government’s mandate there’s a period they lay out, depending on the fiscal situation, what that is and what they find themselves in over a longer period, even longer than the four-year mandate. I guess what this administration has done and often references is a seven-year period that they look at and out to 2022-2023 in regard to where we’re going with the current deficit, where we’re going with a surplus and when we get back to a balanced budget.

There was a lot of discussion yesterday and in past years on getting there. Is it realistic what government has laid out and what the Minister of Finance laid out yesterday? I would suggest

as I go through this morning and make some comments, I'm not sure whether that plan is realistic. I think there's some acknowledgement of that specifically, and I'll talk about it later.

Some of the reviews that were done by the Auditor General, specifically in 2017 in regard to that seven-year plan and getting to where we needed to get based on what they have laid out of 2022-23, if based on economic conditions whether it's reasonable to think we would get there and achieve what's been laid out.

We've had in this province tremendous wealth and royalties from our oil and gas reserves over the past decade. There has been dramatic reduction in those, in the barrel of oil over the past couple of years, certainly seen by Alberta and Saskatchewan as well, oil producing provinces in our country. That has had significant effect in the economies of Alberta, Saskatchewan and here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It was interesting, in prior years we heard some of the Members of the Opposition, when they were in Opposition, talk about we were addicted to oil, we were too dependent on oil; yet, all the forecasts and some of the information they're using now to project where they want to get in 2022 is literally all based on oil projections, what the cost of oil will be, what our production rate will be. It's tied directly to the overall deficit reduction.

The minister talked yesterday about oil projections using 11 forecasters that provide technical advice in regard to what they're seeing on the world stage in where this is going, what the cost is going to be. It's pretty well the same 11 companies we had used as well.

What they do is they try and give the best projections they possibly can in what's happening geopolitically around the world, what's happening in regard to OPEC, those producers now. There are some large producers that are outside of OPEC that have significant influence now on world oil prices.

You look at, as well, countries like Russia and the amount of oil they're producing. You look at the United States and the new direction they've taken in regard to, not only to become self-

sufficient in oil production but also looking to export, which is a new phenomenon for the United States because it was always about being self-sufficient. If you need to look at how they've changed the outlook is they want to be an exporter with shale oil and gas and the production of that; especially, they've been doing it for 60 years in North and South Dakota.

The expansion of that into the US allows them to be a bigger international player in the oil and gas scene where now they become – and the agenda is not only to be self-sufficient in the US, but to be a player and exporter in the world and be a player in that overall market for oil and gas. Which, again, brings some uncertainty and looks at the stability in how that would function in the world, and getting back to those 11 companies that try and project where oil is going to go and what a barrel of oil is going to be.

There are more factors today, I think, involved in that determination to try and identify where that stability is and how it's going to function in years and decades ahead. So it's complex. We recognize that in terms of identifying the barrel of oil, but my point being is that this administration was critical in the past of us and how we used oil in generating wealth for the province.

The reality is we have some of the greatest reserves yet untapped in our oil and gas, in regard to what's offshore here on the Island and certainly offshore in Labrador. So all of that I think, and I think it's agreed, bodes well for our future in regard to those resources and what's available as we go forward.

Oil is a big part of our economy. It will continue to be. We all talk about diversifying our economy and making sure we can draw wealth from various areas of our economy.

As we go through – and we'll talk this morning about other areas – certainly our fishery has traditionally been a huge part of why we settled here originally over 500 years ago in harbours and coves in Newfoundland and Labrador and how that drove our economic activity, and still do today. While we're having some challenges, when we look at last year and the amount landed, there are concerns because aquaculture has been reduced in regard to the amount landed.

When you look at the value, that's because of the prices and those sorts of things, the landed value has increased but the real concern is that the amount that has been landed has continued to decrease. That's from various species whether it's shrimp, crab, groundfish, capelin. We look at now what the issue is in regard to capelin, capelin stocks and the role that plays in their ecosystem. There's even some discussion about whether we should look at banning a capelin fishery in regard to the role that plays in the ecosystem of our fishing industry.

If you go back and look at years ago in Iceland, what happened there when they saw the downturn in their groundfish and their fishing industry, they basically determined they were going to close down the capelin fishery. Basically from the perspective, as I said, that was the major feed of the ecosystem and, based on that, they did that and rebuilt their fishery.

We know where the federal fishery policy comes from; it comes from Ottawa. We can debate that in terms of how that benefited us since 1949 in terms of having input into our fishery. I'll talk about that too as I go through and the financial side of that and what it means for Newfoundland and Labrador.

There has been discussion as well in joint management of that fishery in regard to what we can do in terms of having a say. Because as I said, it's a centralized fisheries policy now, it comes out of Ottawa, very little input in regard to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador having input and making sure the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador – in some cases, the best interest of Atlantic Canada is looked at. A lot of the quotas in Eastern Canada are part of an Atlantic Canada quota and the fish management plan is reflective of that, but one of the things that are certainly discussed in the past is a similar example: the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

That could be established and was established through the Atlantic Accord, which came about in 1985, to allow shared jurisdiction, shared control, shared regulatory framework to drive that industry for the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in conjunction with the federal government and with Canada. But we have right here, established

in the province, the C-NLOPB, which is shared partnership, shared jurisdiction and regulatory control. We have equal representation on the board, equal representation from the administration point of that body. Why couldn't we replicate something like that for the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador?

I know in mandate letters, in the minister across the way, that has been part of it in terms of shared jurisdiction. I guess if you look at just what transpired very recently in the past three to four weeks in regard to a decision on surf clams and how that decision came about, what transpired and then, at the end of the day, it was just an arbitrary decision made by a federal minister in Ottawa that we're reducing a quota by 25 per cent, which is very important to a place like Grand Bank – certainly, Clearwater, a company out of Nova Scotia, and others. Because some time ago, I think there were four or five licences that were part of that industry and, through a process, they came out and they were combined by others.

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

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

I'm having difficulty hearing the speaker.

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

So those quotas did exist and they consolidated. I think there are two now with Clearwater. They continue to drive the industry.

That's great, but up to 2015-2016, I believe, and prior to that, there was only about 50 per cent of the surf clam quota that was taken in any given year. In 2016, that was maximized. But the point being there are opportunities for others within that fishery. When you look at the various species that are under that quota, it's not only surf clams, there are a whole other range of species that are there that could be used and should be used to expand the fishery right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That gets to the point of the joint management or a formalized process where the regulatory framework and the control of that are shared with Newfoundland and Labrador, so we do have an actual say and how that fishery is done

and laid out. The federal government has decided that through our Aboriginal groups and some of the things over our history, a reconciliation process, which is very understandable, but have determined that this industry is a way to deal with that. I guess that's a public policy decision, but over and above that the reality is there are a lot of companies in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Atlantic Canada that would like to see access to that industry.

They talked about a monopoly and reducing a monopoly. Well, there's no new operator that's allowed to enter, based on the decision that's been made. So the point is why not open up that industry, open it up to new operators –

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

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

Can I ask the Members, if they wouldn't mind, to please take their conversations outside? It is really difficult to hear the Opposition House Leader.

Thank you.

Please continue.

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

So from a fisheries policy point of view and how important it is to our economy, certainly to a budget that we heard yesterday and some of the things we've seen in regard to landings being down this year and last, that's a concern.

The answer to – we need to expand that range and access of other species. Just as an example of what's happened in the last number of weeks, surf clams and those types of species are an option that we don't seem to be pursuing, or it's not in the direct benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and the industry here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's certainly an important industry for us, the oil and gas sector, the fishery. We look at our traditional forestry industry and what's been – certainly on the West Coast and Central Newfoundland, it's been a tremendous driver of the economy. Not only something like the mill

in Corner Brook, and I think it's 500 or 600 people now that are employed there, but it's the spinoff from that and the many people who are involved with that industry, whether it's harvesters, whether it's those small companies, whether it's the other sawmills. All of that provides employment to Newfoundland and Labrador.

When you look at that side of it, and some of the challenges in what's happened with the production of newsprint over the past decades and the reduced newsprint production, or newsprint use in the world, and especially in North America, has significantly affected various other paper mills we had in the province. We know what happened with those. Right now we have Corner Brook.

When you look at some of the directions that have been taken in the US in regard to tariffs and the renegotiating of NAFTA, and some of the challenges that's posing for us from an economic point of view, it's extremely challenging. That's why we need strong leadership in dealing with that.

Last summer, we knew the administration in the United States was looking at some tariffs based on the renegotiation of NAFTA, and two direct tariffs actually. One was announced in early January, a countervail tariff. Then just recently, an anti-dumping tariff. Collectively, I think the range for that tariff was somewhere around 30 per cent.

So you can imagine; you're sending a product into the United States and there's a 30 per cent over and above your operations today. I don't know how many companies out there, big corporations even, that have a margin of 30 per cent that they can soak up and all of a sudden still be competitive and still be productive in putting things into a certain market.

We've seen very little action on the other side in dealing with this. The Leader of the Opposition has asked a number of questions over the past number of months in, how do we deal with this and how do we make sure we're being heard in regard to dealing with this? Again, it's very important in regard to our economy and the budget and how we generate wealth.

Part of the budget that was talked about yesterday is getting to a balanced budget in 2022-23. We have a major megaproject. Muskrat Falls is coming to an end in the next while. Over 4,000 people are employed with that. A tremendous amount of people are drawing a salary from that that is driving the economy. We look at the businesses that are tied to that and all of that. That's coming to an end.

When you look at those industries and some of the ones I talked about and outside of that, what's government doing to create that environment? I say create that environment because fundamentally governments don't create jobs. They create the environment where investors want to invest, where there's an environment, a taxation system where young families want to stay and raise their families and contribute to their communities and pay taxes and build communities in those regions. That's government's role, to create that environment.

High taxation, disincentives to stay here, especially in difficult times or financial challenges is problematic. We need to get to the point – I think when you look at some of the indicators in the budget, the economic indicators are not going in the right direction. When you look at things like population; population growth is not going in the right direction.

An immigration strategy, that's good, but you need people who are staying here or living here today to stay, and you need people you are trying to attract to come and live here, you need to demonstrate to them there's an environment here that they would want to come and financially and socially and other reasons – financially is one that the standard of living, the cost of living is equivalent to other jurisdictions and we're competitive. That's something government really needs to continue to look at. This budget, I don't think, reflects that. It doesn't look at people's incentive to stay or people's incentive to come and why they would want to be here, because that's important.

We know where our demographics are going. We know we have an aging population. One of the fastest aging populations in Canada based on province to province to territory. Without that incentive and without that influx of new people,

it's certainly challenging to us and challenging for our economy as we move forward.

I mentioned the forestry, that's certainly one that when we look at the tariffs and the challenges we have, we need to continue to grow that and continue to be strong to the federal government, to make sure the International Trade minister and the folks up there are fully cognizant of the issues of concern.

I think there was a MP from BC asked a question to the minister of trade in the current Liberal government in Ottawa. I think when she responded, she didn't even reference Corner Brook or reference the challenges faced here in Newfoundland and Labrador related to that.

I know there was an issue that came up in regard to the NAFTA negotiations and the rules – or I think it was in regard to steel and the tariff that would go on steel that goes into the US. I know the prime minister went to a couple of steel plants in Ontario and was supportive of the workers and told them we're there for you and we're going to work hard. When this challenge hit Corner Brook, we had no visible display of support from the federal government or from the prime minister in regard to that issue which is, in and of itself, concerning.

So as we look for those industries to drive the economy, which we hadn't seen in the budget yesterday a plan to do it, the issue of NAFTA and continuing to drive our economy, how that may be a disincentive for many of the activities in our economy as we move forward, when we look at the economic indicators, they're again a huge concern as we move forward.

We look at our agricultural industry and we've heard government talk about accessibility to new Crown land, what that's going to do to drive agriculture, but yesterday in the budget there was no reference to what the success has been, what the return has been, how many new farming entities have been established, how many new farmers. None of that was identified yesterday to give us an indication of where the economic growth is coming from to reach targets that are laid out for 2022-2023.

Referring back to the NAFTA negotiations, there is some concern in regard to the issue of

rules of origin around the automobile sector. It was an issue that was brought up in NAFTA negotiations and how there was huge concerns about parts that were made in Canada, often have two or three trips back and forth across the border to build that car, wherever it's built, whether it build in Canada or built in the US. That, through past discussion with the federal government and the US, has been taken off the table. The interest now or discussion now is: Okay, if that was taken off, what are the repercussions of that? What was given up?

One of the things that have been talked about in the agriculture and other sectors is related to supply management. Was Canada willing to or would entertain any move in supply management in regard to offsetting what they're talking about in regard to rules of origin? So would they look at that?

That's a huge concern in the agricultural industry and where it's going. So that's something, again, we need strong representation from the province here and certainly from the federal government as we move forward with that particular ....

Those industries that I've just referenced, the IT sector continues to need growth. Tourism has had success in the past decade. I know we started a process of putting well in excess of \$10 million into our advertising and marketing in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some of the companies that were involved with that were internationally recognized for the commercials and the marketing program they had, and numerous awards. That spurred on, I think, the start of something exceptional for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're continuing to see growth in the tourism sector, which is indeed positive. I certainly acknowledge on the other side that they've continued that significant investment, which they should, and continue to promote this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador as a place to come and spend. I know last year, if I remember correctly, non-resident visitors were up, which is certainly good. Because that means there's new dollars coming to the province. We're not circulating the same dollars in the economy. We have new money coming in from outside.

We look at some of our airports. Torbay comes to mind, and Deer Lake, in regard to the amount of people that are coming through. That all drives the industry and drives particular activities here in the Province.

On the tourism side – again, from my particular area and where I represent, from the Goulds area to St. Shott's – it's huge and has been significant in regard to the amount of investment and what happens in the tourism industry. We have a number of operators, small businesses. Whether it's the service sector, whether it's B&B. We have non-profit groups that provide tremendous environments for visitors to come.

We have the Colony of Avalon, to name a few. We have the UNESCO designation in Portugal Cove South, Cape Race-Portugal Cove South Heritage Inc. All of those groups – and that's only a couple. There are many throughout the area that provide tremendous benefits for the industry, and that's right around the Irish Loop. That's enormous, significant, in what transpires and how you drive it.

The other day I did a Member's statement on the Edge of Avalon in Trepassey, the Edge of Avalon Inn. Some of the things – just an example of an entrepreneur who revitalized the hotel in Trepassey, Carol Ann and John Devereaux. That's where entrepreneurs were – there was an opportunity there with some of the traffic we're seeing from the UNESCO site in Portugal Cove South, the new designation in 2016.

Through that, there were entrepreneurs who took the risk, were assisted by government and – were assisted, but then they took the risk to drive those initiatives that were important to those. So I think that's very clear, that where an opportunity exists and you create that environment, entrepreneurs, with encouragement, hopefully will take that risk and drive economic opportunity.

We've had some challenges on the UNESCO piece in regard to investments on the other side in that provincial designation as a World Heritage Site. I don't believe, and I haven't seen it in the budget, but I certainly look forward to seeing details, if there is any new money to assist with the UNESCO site in Portugal Cove



South. With those great volunteers up there that run a board which has been in place, various names and so forth, but the volunteers have been – to get it to the point of it got listed on the UNESCO list, a lot of work done.

We supported that as a government in getting the dossier and all the documentation and everything done to make sure it could get reviewed. It did get reviewed in Turkey in 2016 through the normal process, United Nations, when they meet to consider those applicants and those that are on the list. Luckily enough, it was given that designation. It was an exciting time, and great appreciation to all those who were involved with that.

With that comes a management plan and that management plan for UNESCO designation is to make sure the plan and the details of it are met because your designation is tied to that. With that comes a need for an input of dollars because this designation is a provincial designation in regard to World Heritage Sites. The rest in the province are with the federal government or with Parks Canada, but this is the first that's provincially designated a UNESCO site.

It's a World Heritage Site, and obviously the world comes and the world recognizes that. But to the best of my knowledge it hasn't been demonstrated – there has been no new money invested by this current government in a provincially designated UNESCO site. This year in the budget, I haven't seen it, but I'd hope there would be. Last year I know there was a meeting with the then minister in regard to that site. There was an ask for, I think, \$75,000 to try to help in regard to the administration of the site.

So there's an interpretation site in Portugal Cove South that had been built through cost sharing over the past number of years. That's operated by volunteers. That serves not only Mistaken Point, but Cape Race and all the visitors that go out to these two entities.

I think last year the numbers continued to grow. There may be somewhere between 8,000 and 10,000 people visited that site and would have went to Mistaken Point or seen the fossils and the replicas of them in the interpretation site would have had that experience – not go on site but had it within the building and/or went out to

Cape Race and seen the Myrick communication station out there which would have been –

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Yes, indeed, it is lovely.

It would have been the first site for the *Titanic* and that tragedy; the SOS would have been received at Cape Race and at the Myrick communication site.

That's all part of growing that cluster of activities in the area so you can bring people in, you can see economic development but, in that case, we need government support and it's been rare to find over the past little while in regard to funding that which is a provincial, as I said, UNESCO heritage site.

Hopefully, in this budget, there's some help for those volunteers. At this point now, it's even gone to the point where they're selling tickets and things like that to operate the interpretation site and this is a World Heritage Site that's here in Newfoundland and Labrador provincially. In terms of driving tourism and the other side talks about economic development, it's a prime example of how an opportunity can be built on, but it needs support and I hope in the days ahead we'll be hearing about where that support is coming from.

That's just a particular example of tourism and what it means to the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador and how it's another area that we continue to grow and continue to make better the opportunities we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

My point in picking out some of those industries that I've talked about, whether it's the oil and gas sector, whether it's the fishery, whether it's the forestry, tourism, IT, the other industries, all of those – the mining sector, we've seen, over the past decade, some improvements in the mining sector. The commodity market is volatile as well in natural resources in the mining sector, but we've seen some promising finds, the Baie Verte Peninsula; you look about gold and some of the things that have happened out there in the building of that out there has been very positive in terms of our province and an economic driver in that particular region as well.

Unfortunately, when you look at Voisey's Bay and the underground mine, we've been asking for two years now what's happening there.

There was a commitment made to go underground, which would be huge in terms of the construction of that. I think it was about 400 jobs for construction and then a couple of hundred after in terms of operations. But that again, when you look at the economic indicators we have and where they're going, in the wrong direction, we need this opportunity and we need these opportunities to evolve and to kick in so we can start to have those contributors to our economy which are so important. Again, we've heard nothing on that.

There is an agreement in place, there are commitments made and they should be held accountable. We should be able to deal with that. The government on the other side doesn't seem to want to do to deal with it.

Cobalt, as a commodity, has increased in regard to its value worldwide, and my understanding is that it's used in batteries. When you look at some of the transitions that's going on in regard to getting off fossil fuel and building batteries for vehicles and those types of things, it's well needed in this particular time.

The derivative from iron ore, my understanding is cobalt and that provides a huge opportunity in regard to the underground mine and what we can do. It's not only iron ore, but it can certainly be an advantage to marketing and making it profitable. Yet, we're hearing nothing in regard to why this is not moving forward, which is a concern.

There's an opportunity there and I certainly wish government would get on and push that opportunity to make sure we can continue to drive the economy. As I said yesterday in the budget, while there was a forecast made in how we're going to drive new opportunity in the economy, where it's coming from, what industry, the details on that were scarce, as they would say. There was a reporter who would say: Details are scanty. Yes, details were very scanty in regard to how we're going to do that. It's great to put out forecasts, we're going to hit targets, but you have to do the backfilling of information of how we're going to hit that, and

certainly that was lacking in what we heard yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, mining, as I said, is one of those sectors that I talked about and how it continues to grow the economy and it's important to us. That gets to the indicators that we need in our economy to drive wealth and drive taxation and all those things that we get to make Newfoundland and Labrador a place you want to live and you want to raise your family. We need to increase our population, as well, from the immigration point that I talked about earlier when I started related to that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about – this is the third budget of this particular government. I think it's important to look back and see what the original direction was in the first year of the mandate, what were some of things discussed and how the particular administration, in their mandate, was going to deal with some of the issues that they were faced with. In starting out, I talked about industry and what's important to Newfoundland and Labrador – and there are others as well – and I tied that to the economic indicators that I think, if anybody out there wanted to look, it's on page 13 of the *Budget 2018 – The Economy* and it lists the various indicators in terms of the economy, retail sales, housing starts, all of those indicators that allows the economy to grow and returns dollars back to the economy.

If industry doesn't grow and we're not supporting industry and we're not creating that environment and that competitive environment dealing with other provinces, that's a concern. That's what we think is lacking in this budget in regard to that clear picture of where we're moving.

We went back to the first budget in 2017 and the speech from the minister at that time – a different minister than the one who gave the speech yesterday – there were conversations about tough fiscal economic times; we could understand that. There was talk about an evidence-based approach to projects, to programs, to services and how they're supported.

Then it went on; there was talk about bankruptcy and all those kinds of things but the Premier said

– and I agree, I don't think we're in a position where bankruptcy is something when you look at the resources and everything else we have in this province and we look at equity that we currently own, all of those things. I think that's not where we need to be in regard to a province and looking forward. We need to recognize there are challenges, but we need to talk about and support all of those things that are available to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Some of those industries I've talked about hold great potential. I think it's important that we talk about that and, as I said, deal with the challenges in a clear and concise path that we can lay out. Yet, let's stand up as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as we always have done, to say we can make our way through when there are huge opportunities that exist for us.

There was also talk in the 2017 budget from the minister at the time, making hard choices and asking taxpayers to dig deep into their pockets so we can close the gap between our revenue and costs. I guess everybody would say they're still digging deep into our pockets – everybody's pockets. We saw a little relief yesterday in regard to some of the insurance costs, particularly related just to automotive. All other insurance costs would stay. I think it's a 2 per cent reduction of the 15 over the next number of years that would reduce it down to 10 per cent, if I remember correctly.

The minister, at the time, talked about we were on a path to gain control of our finances and strike the balance between better spending controls and valuable investments in communities, people and the economy. Well, some would argue, based on what we heard yesterday, and as I said earlier in regard to a path they had laid out to 2022-23, we're not sure whether that's been realized. When you look at some fundamental numbers in regard to program expenditures, overall debt expenses, we were criticized for spending over and above in budgets. Yet, when you go back and look at the program debt and total expenses for the three budgets that we're talking about here, this government has continued to allow those to grow.

So you can't have it both ways. Either someone overspent and they shouldn't have, but now you're going to bring in budgets that continues

and don't make the necessary changes in the expenditures to allow you to reach your goals. This is a pattern. We've certainly seen it here and we've also seen it in the federal government in Ottawa. In that first lead up, I guess, in that campaign and in 2015, the current administration in Ottawa said they were going to run a \$10 billion deficit. At the end of the day, I think it came up to about \$18 billion. Again, this year, I think they're forecasting a deficit of \$28 billion. So it seems like we're copying what's happening in Ottawa. There's no indication of reduction. At least here there's a plan, but I don't think they're going to reach it, of 2022 of a balanced budget.

Ottawa is saying they haven't even set a target to balance the books. Most economists out there say with status quo, it might be 2045 and we might get there, but that's highly unlikely because usually there's a recession or a slowdown in the economy every so many years. So that's not factored in.

When we look at the pattern here of expenditures and getting things in line, the current format of the current administration in regard to getting there is not reflected and certainly their plan cannot be achieved with numbers that we've seen in the first three budgets.

So if we look back again in 2017 in regard to how this was all set up and what we were going to do, if you remember back then, as well, there was discussion about future supplementary budgets. There was a budget given early in the first year of the mandate. The first part of that, to deal with some of the fiscal challenges, was we were going to have revenue generation. There were 300 fees that were either increased or added that provided, if I can remember, maybe over \$900 million in new revenues, but the caveat to that was that later in the year we were going to have supplementary budgets to deal with the expense side of the ledger.

Lo and behold, we never got to those preliminary budgets related to the expenditure component. Now, we're not sure why because we asked here in the House many times, what about the other side of the ledger? Why didn't we deal with that? To date, we haven't heard that explanation.

We moved on from the revenue side, and the revenue side continued to roll in last year's budget with the continuation of the taxation that was brought in. As well, this year, which I mentioned earlier, a very limited reduction in the taxation that was brought in in the past two budgets.

Now, an interesting comment in the 2017 budget, the first year of the mandate of this particular government, "... tax increases must be balanced with tax competitiveness." They talked about doing an independent review of the tax system. I'm not sure where that is or what's transpired. I don't think there was a lot of reference to it yesterday.

When you have some of the highest taxation levels in the country, it's pretty ironic that in the third year of your term you're doing a taxation review to see, I guess, to get some feedback on how you should handle taxation policy; yet, at the same time, the current taxation policy that's being implemented is basically negatively affecting your economy and making you uncompetitive with the other jurisdictions across the country.

The other issue that has come up, and doesn't seem to be talked about a lot and wasn't mentioned yesterday. There seems to be a discussion that there's no new taxes. Well, we have a carbon tax coming which is pushed on us by the federal government. If we go back, and I'll speak to it a little later about some initiatives we did in this House a while back in regard to the carbon tax and what it is.

People out there should not be confused with the fact that there's no new taxes. That's a huge tax. Right now we have no idea how it's being implemented. There was no indication of it yesterday in the budget, and it's really going to affect directly every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

When you look at the gas tax that was put on, and it has started to be rolled back. There's some indication that the last 4 or 5 per cent that was put on will be used, will come off at some point. Maybe this year it will be announced some time, and we'll put four or five cents back on and that will be the carbon tax. Well, that's going to hit every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. If it's

gasoline tax, obviously, if you drive you're going pay it.

Second to that, we know we live on an Island, and a lot of goods and services are transported to Newfoundland and Labrador. So the companies out there and the providers, the trucking companies and all of those, guess what they're going to do? They're going to pass it on. They're going to pass it on to families, they're going to pass it on to municipalities, they're going to pass it on to buildings, to our educational system; anywhere where there is a requirement for goods and services.

To say there are no new taxes, there's a double tax coming. It's a direct pay by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and the second one is through the whole economy and how that filters through and trickles down. We talked earlier about the economic indicators and what they are today and going in a negative direction. You put that on top of it, that's not, I don't think, going to benefit in any way in terms of reaching the so-called target of 2022.

Some jurisdictions, I just saw recently – I think there are four provinces that talk about reaching targets in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. I think there are four or five provinces that haven't met it. Some provinces basically said they're not in favour of the carbon tax, particularly related to what it can do to the economy. I just made a small reference to that.

If you look at the oil and gas sector, outside of a gas tax that people would – buying their gasoline would have to pay and then filters down through the economy, but outside in terms of the biggest industries and what that would mean. Again, a big concern in regard to the overall growth of the province in terms of our economy and how that's achieved.

The carbon tax, again, is something that was directed by the federal government. I don't think we had a lot of push back in regard to that particular aspect of it. Although, if I do remember, we came through – here in the House of Assembly, we had a discussion and we passed a bill and legislation in regard to a carbon tax. That was prior to the federal government announcing a requirement for a carbon tax.

The discussion here, I think, was five industries in the province that there would be a two-year review done of the emissions of those five entities here in the province. Based on that – and I know we asked questions to the Environment Minister in regard to this. I think he said some time ago that's still ongoing, but that was a two-year review of the greenhouse gas emissions of these five entities here in the province, and that didn't include the offshore. It included those five industries here in the province.

The plan was when we passed the bill here, was that would be looked at over the next two years. Based on those greenhouse gas emissions, I think there would be a fund set up and you would pay into that, and it would be an incentive for them to use that to change their habits and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And that could be through new technology, it could be through other means, but that would be the point of that.

Now, that was done prior to the federal government saying they were going to regulate a carbon tax. I remember asking here in the House to the then minister of Environment, what happens if the federal government comes up with a new means and mandates a tax. They said, well, that's something we'll look at then, and that's something that we won't concern ourselves with right now because we're doing our own thing. We're doing our made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador tax regime.

What came about afterwards – and I know the then minister had meetings. I think when the federal government announced their carbon tax, the then environment minister went to Ottawa, had some discussions, and actually left the discussions in Ottawa because I think there was some discomfort with the fact that we were mandated to pay a tax.

I think the Premier said he had left on his own. There were some reports that he was directed to leave. Either way there was some concern expressed about the carbon tax which, in and of itself, was a good thing. But it seems we've given up on that now and we're going to, based on the federal government, jam a carbon tax on Newfoundland and Labrador. Which I said is two-fold, based on an individual tax and a tax that's going to be filtered throughout the

economy and trickle down and cause the kind of negative effect that we don't need, and it's not going to help any plan that's put in place here in regard to the economic indicators here in the province.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** It will impact everybody.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** It's going to impact everybody, indeed.

So just for those out there to give you an idea, because I don't know whether people realize in regard to carbon tax and what it actually is, generally it's applied to try and encourage people of the use of carbon dioxide they emit into the atmosphere. There are two forms, being a carbon tax or be a cap and trade program. Some jurisdictions in Canada – I think Quebec and Ontario – have gone with a cap and trade, where you earn credits in regard to your performance, and you can buy credits, and based on that there's economic-wide limits on emissions and there are a lot of permits for emissions that can buy and sell with the cost passed on to consumers.

We always hear about carbon tax being neutral. No one's really explained how that's neutral, because at the end of the day, the consumer or the folks living in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's not going to be neutral to them when that money is coming out of their pocket. And that's taking away already limited income through the 300 taxes and fees we already have in this province. It's not going to be very neutral to families in Newfoundland and Labrador, I can guarantee you that, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the things about the carbon tax, and we've got offshore here, our oil and gas sector, and some of the challenges with that. That's something we can look at in regard to the offshore industry.

The critic here in our caucus last week presented a private Member's resolution in regard to not enforcing the carbon tax at this time. I believe this side, this caucus, supported it.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Yes.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** They did. Did the other Opposition? I'm not sure.

Anyway, we think in terms of where we are – and he certainly articulated very clearly in terms of why we shouldn't, why it's not appropriate at this particular time, and other jurisdictions in Canada reflects that as well in regard to what we can do.

If I remember correctly – I'm not sure of the number – Canada produces 2 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. I think Newfoundland and Labrador is maybe 2 per cent of that 2 per cent in terms of what our production is in greenhouse gases.

Now, everybody's concerned. There are things we need to do. There are things we have done. But when you look at Newfoundland and Labrador – and the other point my colleague made when he got up and spoke was that we've invested. We look at hydro development in the province and what we've done for decades. With the completion of Muskrats Falls, I think the number is 98 or 99 per cent in reduction in terms of hydroelectricity development.

From that perspective, we've made huge contributions already to greenhouse gas emissions. When you look at the intent to take Holyrood out of commission and everything that flows out of that facility, greenhouse gas emissions and we've heard as well from this side in regard to what that means to region out there and what they're exposed to in regard to those emissions, but overall, if you take that out, why wouldn't we be recognized for that already for a carbon tax – why would we pay a carbon tax?

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have invested in all of our hydro and the ratepayer – we've reduced the greenhouse gas emissions through that and now we're being asked to be taxed again for making that investment. Not only that, when you look at Upper Churchill and that amount of electricity that flows through Quebec and they sell it, I think, it's a fifth of a cent – they've made \$28 billion off it; I think we've made \$1 billion. Anyway, they send that off and that's going into areas that are not using coal, aren't using fossil fuels but are using electricity. So that has reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

When you look at the partnership with Emera and the ability to sell excess energy into the

Atlantic provinces and the Eastern Seaboard, we look at places like New Brunswick and Nova Scotia where they have, I think, maybe 60 per cent of their electricity is generated by coal. The federal government, I think, has regulated that needs to stop. I think it was 2020 and now they've extended into 2030. Recognizing that it's very likely that our hydro development and our electricity is going to offset the burning of coal in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, yet we're asked to pay again a carbon tax to do that.

We've made our contribution; the taxpayers will have contributed to that. So again, the issue of the carbon tax, we don't think, is going to help as we move forward in regard to our carbon tax.

I did mention earlier and I'll just go back and clarify that the federal Liberals said the provinces and territories must put a price on carbon in order to slow climate change.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** It was October 3, 2016 the prime minister at the time announced a floor price on carbon that requires all provinces and territories to have some form of carbon prices in by 2018. I think that's been moved up to July. If provinces do not implement a price, Ottawa would impose a \$10 carbon, which will increase yearly to \$50 a ton to 2022.

That's the centralized move again, I guess, from Ottawa to the province. We saw it before, I mentioned earlier, (inaudible) when you talk about surf clams in the fishery. Some of the other provinces – British Columbia have introduced the carbon tax; Alberta has put their own floor in with regard to what they're going to charge. It's offside a bit with the federal government. PEI says they have a carbon tax which is fiscally neutral. I'm not sure if any tax is ever fiscally neutral when you're taking out of the pockets of residents and then that's affecting their disposal income on what they can spend or not spend in the economy.

When you look at the money, they talk about disincentives or using it to change behaviour in regard to what is happening, all of those things. Again, we don't think at this point in time this is

where we need to go in regard to assisting the economy.

I did mention in regard to the discussions – and I just found it here in what we had done in legislation. In June of 2016, we introduced legislation and we talked about it here that it had flexible compliance options on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Bill 34, that would be monitoring emissions and then encouraging large industrial emitters in this province to reduce their emissions. If they did not meet the targets, there would be options for them to offset those emissions on paying into a technology fund. That was introduced at the time by the minister and it was the preferable in our province for our options.

Further to that, in October, that's when Minister Trudeau announced, after the fact, about the floor price on carbon and mandating the provinces that they had to pay it. There was the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment meeting, our minister was there. We went there and said we didn't want to be part of it; but, subsequently, what happened, happened. That exists today. It's still going to be part, apparently, of what it is.

When we go through that particular side of it; the carbon tax, as I said, people think there are no new taxes here, there are. It's coming and it's going to filter down through everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, I guess, by July. The Premier has said we would have that by the spring. I guess we'll wait and see where that's going to be and what the result of it will be.

I talked about some of the commentary in 2017 in setting up the long-term plan of this government in regard to fiscal management. They talked about at the time, too, about the expenses related to – they had their Way Forward program, they had the government renewal initiative. I think there were a couple of more names they threw around in regard to programs to deal with some of the issues.

There was also talk about two elements that are important to short-term for the fiscal year, zero-based budgeting and the implementation of a more efficient balanced management structure. Now that's interesting, because just this year, zero-based budgeting was supposed to be all

done in 2017, implementation of a more efficient and balanced management structure.

Just this year, the Minister of Finance talked about – he was talking about ABCs and talking about the fact that we were going to bring in legislation to deal with their spending. Then it was, we had a discussion with them, or he did, and the issue then was they were going to try and get them in line. The fact being, this zero-based budgeting was supposed to have been done. I think the prior minister talked about reviewing stuff line by line; yet, when the actual numbers I think were identified in last year's budget, and we asked about those numbers, the targets hadn't been reached with the ABCs, the agencies, boards and commissions. That's not, I don't think, in line with what the terms of the plan is and what was outlined to do that.

There was some talk about as well, as I said: zero-based budgeting changes to management structure, savings from agencies, boards and commissions, annualized savings. All of those were talked about in regard to deficit reduction and how that would be done.

When we look at yesterday and some of the comments and some of the documents that were put in with the budget, I think it's relevant to recognize some of the discussions or some of the reviews that were done by the Auditor General in October 2017, when he looked at the current outline of information and the fiscal plan that was laid out, not only from a budget perspective but from a seven-year plan that was laid out to 2022. That was talked about yesterday in regard to reaching a balanced budget by that time and if it's realistic.

One of the observations at that point in time, and we all know this: “The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador generates more revenue, on a per capita basis, than every other province. This suggests that revenue is not the primary issue creating the deficits.”

They talked about: “The 2016-17 Public Accounts shows a reduction in” expenditures “of \$68 million from the previous year.” And that's program expenses.

It goes on to talk about debt servicing. We see that's significant this year. I think it's gone up

\$600 million, if I remember correctly. He says in his October 2017 report in looking at the province's plan and what they've laid out long-term, he said: "The Provincial forecast for the period 2017-18 to 2022-23 expects expenses to drop by 2.3% over that period."

His concern with that is: "Expenses over the six year period to 2022-23 are forecast by the Province to reduce slightly by \$187 million – a 2.3% decline."

The issue with that was when you look at the plan that was laid out yesterday and apparently the continued plan for 2017, is that amount of reduction and if you look at variables like the cost of oil, the amount of production, other intervening variables that may appear at a point in time in regard to the economy, whether there's a slowdown. We have a slowdown now. There's no indication in the information presented yesterday how that's going to improve the economic indicators and those sorts of things.

The Auditor General in 2017 talked about on a per capita basis, Newfoundland and Labrador generates more revenue than any other province, per capita spending in this province is substantially higher than per capita revenues and we spend more than every other province by a considerable margin. He's concern, and I guess the budget yesterday sort of recognized that, that the path we're on and the projections that are given are really not going to hit what the government is suggesting in 2022-23.

Newfoundland and Labrador spends in excess of 21 per cent more per capita than the next highest province, which is Saskatchewan. So the 2.3 per cent reduction, his point, is not going to hit the target that's being proposed.

He talked about a risk to achieving a balanced budget. I guess that goes to what's been talked about yesterday and what the minister brought in in regard to that budget. He said: "A budget forecast involves making reasonable estimates based on realistic assumptions regarding expectations of future outcomes. The longer the forecast period, the greater the risk that expected outcomes may be significantly different than expected."

The six year revenue forecast to 2022-23 is based on assumptions regarding such items as oil prices, oil production, exchange rates and future economic activity in a variety of sectors of the economy."

When I started earlier, I talked about the oil and gas, the fishery, tourism, the IT sector, the forestry industry. All of those ones that need to have activity. Muskrat Falls is coming down. You have about 4,000 employed there; they're coming out, all of those – and what's going to help meet these goals and targets through economic activity because that's where the wealth needs to be generated.

As I said, the Auditor General said the six-year revenue forecast to 2022-23, the assumption based on such things as oil prices, oil production, exchange rates and future economic activity in a variety of sectors of the economy. He also goes on to say: While it is possible that the forecast may be exceeded, there is considerable risk that the revenue forecast may not be achieved. For example, oil royalties may be less than expected as a result of lower than expected oil prices, lower than expected production.

As I said before, this was an administration prior to an Opposition, when coming in, said we were addicted to oil; yet, everything here really on this is – the major component of it is related to oil.

When we look at revenues through the taxation and what's been implemented, there was indeed an increase. I guess on the reverse side of that, one needs to ask, what effect did that have on the economy. You're taking disposable income out of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians pockets. The economic indicators – we'll look at in a little while – show the trickle-down effect of that is it's taking money out of the economy and people don't spend.

Then the other side of it talked about our population, our demographics and to have people stay and live here in the province. If people wanted to move here, if you don't have that environment where people want to come and raise their families – small business want to come, entrepreneurs want to come and invest –



that becomes problematic in driving the economy.

The Auditor General said as well: “Oil royalties represent” – at that time – “about 14% of total revenue” from where it was in 2011-2012.

This is the other point too; on the expenditure side we talked about a 2.3 per cent reduction, which is marginal, and whether it could ever be achieved. Then he talked about on the revenue side, “... the six year period to 2022-23 is forecast by the Province to grow by \$1.1 billion.” So that’s the revenue side of it. The forecast is a growth of \$1.1 billion in revenues by the time we get to 2022-23. Where’s that coming from?

The Auditor General looked at that, and this is what he said: “Almost 27% of this growth is expected from oil (predominantly increased oil prices).” So that’s back to what we talked about earlier in regard to those 11 agencies that gives forecasting and some direction or some thoughts on how we’re getting, in the future, to a certain percentage or a certain dollar for a barrel of oil.

Then it factors into, from the exporting side of things, what the cost is and the exchange rate and all those kinds of things. There are variables there that are very tenuous. They’re up and down, based on the geopolitics of the world and what is going on, who’s producing and who’s not, who’s in OPEC and who’s not. All of that is factored into what the oil price is.

The AG recognizes that based on the forecast that’s given by this current administration, there are many variables in place on that \$1.1 billion in new revenue – yes, \$1.1 billion, which is significant.

Some of the other things he talked about in regard to the results of: “Other tax revenue may be negatively impacted by a slowing economy.” This is the Auditor General, and this is what we’ve said and what we’ve talked about, is that there is huge concern and has been – and I think we’ve seen the result of that in the amount of taxation and what’s used in that particular case.

Again, I keep repeating, you’re taking the money out of people’s pockets. The entrepreneurs, the businesses aren’t seeing what

they usually would see in activity in their companies. Just all along it causes concern.

The Auditor General recognized: Other tax revenue may be negatively affected by a slow economy. If you’re going to take \$1.2 billion and raise new money, where are you getting it from? If you’re taking it out of the economy, you’re taking it out of people’s pockets. That doesn’t help the economic indicators that we talked about in regard to this.

Muskrat Falls revenue – and this is one of the key areas that has been talked about before in regard to where this money is coming from – the \$1.2 billion. I don’t know if I read that, but the Auditor General on using the reference to the revenues of \$1.2 billion says: “Almost 27% of this growth is expected from oil (predominantly increased oil prices) and the remaining 73% from other sources (including expected profit from Muskrat Falls).”

Now that’s interesting, because folks on the other side have said and the Premier has said no one wants to buy the power; yet, the Auditor General in reviewing the fiscal forecast of his government says that 73 per cent of the \$1.2 billion they expect to raise by 2022-23 to put in the coffers, 73 per cent is coming from other sources including expected profit from Muskrat Falls.

We know when we wrote – and I have it here somewhere – a while ago, asked a bunch of questions on Muskrat Falls operations and what had transpired. We asked a number of questions, and I think it was November 2016 I wrote the minister – no, that’s when a response came. It was prior to that, a few months, I think maybe three months prior to that. I know she told me she had to go to Nalcor and Natural Resources to get all that information. And that would have been under the new CEO, Mr. Stan Marshall, who was brought in by the current administration and would have been related to the new board of directors that were appointed. So that’s where this information would have come from.

In regard to that reference of what the AG said: 73 per cent of that growth in revenue is going to come from profit from Muskrat Falls. We said in the fall of 2015, we asked: it was suggested by

the CEO of Nalcor in a report to government that there was the potential of a \$3.3 billion in electricity export revenue that was not counted in the project's finance. That was the question we asked to Nalcor and the new CEO after the changes were made.

At that time we also asked – we talked about excess power and how much power is expected to be exported over the next 35 years at what rates. What will both the cost and revenue from the export of excess energy sales be?

We were looking for the project in regard to the sale of excess energy, because it was always the intent that the excess energy would allow for reduction in electricity rates. So that would help offset. That's why we were looking for the information from the new CEO of Nalcor.

We committed to maximizing the value – and this was some of the response we got back. We are committed to maximizing the value of the province's energy assets for domestic use and export. Nalcor actively markets and sells our available excess energy to external customers via spot markets. My understanding for that is that at any particular time energy is put into the spot market and there is bidding done on that particular electricity at a particular time, and the rates can fluctuate up and down in terms of what that would be.

Obviously, in much needed times of the year, whether it's cold temperatures, or in the US in a hotter environment where you have air conditioning, that sort of thing going on. It depends on the time of the year and what the spot market will deliver. No doubt, over that period of time you would demonstrate an average rate or rate of return or what that cost would be over 12 months.

In response to our question in regard to the revenues and the potential of \$3.3 billion that was referenced by the CEO of Nalcor – we were told they would be into the market and spot market and generate what they need to generate. They gave us a report that: attached represents the current forecasts for surplus energy and outlook for electricity prices.

This would have included all the assumptions, all the information they had in regard to

electricity forecast and rates. Now, interestingly enough, prior to the new CEO coming in – obviously, assumptions were done and forecast and all those types of things in energy. But after he came in, they changed somewhat. They were told they were changed. Yet when he came in and took over, the same people stayed in place. There was no one let go. The project manager for Muskrat Falls stayed, the VPs all stayed, there was nobody changed.

We were told the assumptions changed and the assumptions were wrong. Maybe they were, I don't know. Maybe the inquiry will determine that they were wrong. But it is kind of different that the same people who were always there – shortly after he came in, he told us the assumptions were wrong. What was it based on because the same people who were there prior to had, I guess, come up with the assumptions, yet after the fact they were wrong. I guess at some point someone will explain that.

When you look at the excess power again and what we asked for, we also continue to explore other potential options to export Newfoundland and Labrador surplus electricity. An interconnection to the North American grid will open up additional opportunities.

The minister brought in a bill the other day which deals with the interconnection and the regulatory framework we need to follow as we move forward with the line coming from Labrador into the Island and then on to Nova Scotia and into the Eastern Seaboard, so that provides that circuit. We certainly supported that and that was always part of the original plan to do that because obviously you need that. You need to comply with the FERC rules; the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is how it's referred to. In Quebec they have the parallel, Régie I think it's called, and that does similar things.

That means non-discriminatory actions in regard to the transmission of electricity. So if one jurisdiction is doing it and they allow you to do it, you need to complement and do the same thing. We need to do that to allow us to flow and do what needs to be done, and that just brings it in line. So we had a good discussion and that. I thank the minister and her colleagues. We had a

really good discussion on that, and her staff. It was very well done.

Getting back to what we asked for in regard to the excess energy, what we were given, and the interconnection to the North American grid – now bear in mind, the Premier said there's no one who wants the energy, they can't sell it, yet we have seen in the past number of months, even, I think it was Massachusetts or New Hampshire got together and put out a broad proposal for seven or eight terawatts of power to flow down to them. There's a little roadblock, but I think Hydro-Québec had won that proposal to send that electricity down. Obviously, the market is there and there's a need for it, which is important.

So when you look at the question that was asked in regard to a reference made to electricity, the cost of \$3.3 billion electricity export revenue that was not counted in the project's finances, we just look for details.

So what we got was a chart and it said: Forecasted excess energy, energy available for export. So when you go across, starting in 2020 – and we're told that first power from Muskrat would probably be in 2019 now – it shows the production of energy that's available. Then it looks at total export sales, net revenue in millions of dollars.

It starts in 2020. In 2020, it says \$153 million, then it goes to \$135 million, \$123 million and then it goes on to 2027, \$167 million. So what it's recognizing here, from the CEO of Nalcor and the folks over there and the information they provided, is that the excess energy, here's what we're projecting.

The Auditor General identified that in government's forecast, for their seven-year forecast, they're recommending a \$1.1 billion increase in their revenues to get to their balanced books in 2023-23 and up to 70 per cent of that could be profits from Muskrat Falls. So I assume they're using this information as part of that, but it's kind of difficult to get that understanding when the Premier said no one wants the energy.

Anyway, we'll go back to what was presented to us. From 2020 to 2040, the excess sales, it rages from \$100 million a year, \$150 million a

year to, I think, the highest is \$190 million a year. So from 2020 to 2040, over a 20-year period, it's about \$3.5 billion. That's what it works out to.

So this is information that we didn't calculate. We didn't come up with this. This came from Nalcor and from the minister on direct question of the excess sales and what are you projecting and what is your forecast. I think it ties in nicely to what the Auditor General had said, in 2017, when he looked at some of the forecasts. The forecast is the government is going to get these revenues and where are the revenues coming from. This is the government's plan. It's not anything we – it's theirs and the AG looked at it and this is the supporting documentations in regard to what they're suggesting. As I said, that was from Nalcor and the minister; we asked for and got it I think in the fall of 2016.

In regard to that as well, we had discussions about: Has the total net revenue from the sale of excess energy been factored into the project's finances? Please demonstrate where this is factored in and the impact on the cost of the project and domestic power rates in this province. That was the question we proposed. At that time the answer was: No, the revenue from the sales of energy in excess of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro's base block entitlement was not factored into the estimated domestic electricity rates released on June 24, 2016 or this project cost update at the time.

That was the question we asked regarding the actual rate and the excess energy, because we don't get much discussion on that. We hear comments that no one wants it, we can't sell it, yet the Crown corporation that's overseeing all this with the new CEO, the new board of directors, this information came out after that and it's clearly identifying that they're projecting over a 20-year period over \$3 billion sales in excess revenue, and the government is using that in their forecast. That's the information that's made available to us.

Mr. Speaker, that goes to that issue and ties into that budget and, as I started today, talked about looking at the projections that are being made for seven years to get us to 2022-23 – is it conceivable? Can we get there? I talked about the fact that expenses are going to reduce about

by about 2.3 per cent. When you look in and factor in those other variables related to commodity prices, in particular oil prices, those types of things, whether there's a recession or not, whether the economic indicators we have here and most going in wrong direction, whether they can help to drive the economy and create some of that wealth that supposedly is going to be created, I guess we'll see.

We also asked about – because we had a discussion here in the House about this – Quebec and whether discussions are going on. A number of months ago, the Energy minister in Quebec said there were discussions going on but when you asked here they said no, there was no discussions going on.

We also asked at that time: Is the current government exploring the option of selling excess energy through Hydro-Québec? Have any negotiations commenced with Hydro-Québec? Answer: Nalcor has been already selling excess energy in Labrador using Hydro-Québec's transmission system for several years. That's not new. The company continues to explore opportunities with multiple customers to enhance the value of energy that is surplus to the province's needs. This says: Neither the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador or Nalcor Energy has been involved in discussions with Hydro-Québec on Muskrat Falls power.

This response was generated in late 2016, if I remember correctly – yes, indeed it was. I just think that ties in nicely to the seven-year plan that this administration talks about. It ties in nicely to the Auditor General and what he reviewed in 2017, how he talked about the balance sheet and the expenses, talked about the revenues and talked about the 2.3 per cent and I'm not sure whether that's going to get you to 2022. And what they talked about yesterday in terms of getting back to balanced books and surplus and as well from determining, from the revenue side of things, whether you can reach where you need to reach and where that revenue is projected to come from, I think that ties in and certainly poses a lot of questions in regard to what the current administration talks about when they talk about their expenses and revenues.

I wanted to talk about too, Mr. Speaker, go back and look at some of the budgets in regard to –

we heard about investments from the federal government. No doubt, much like past administrations at various times there has been significant dollars allocated for infrastructure. In Canada, my understanding is as the pot goes up or the money goes up for infrastructure, it's divvied up per capita.

So we've asked here, and I know my colleagues have asked – and we've talked about the federal government, we're getting more money, we're getting this and we're getting that, we said well, show us, outside of per capita of any other province, how much we're getting and what the extra money is. But we have been unable to get that. I guess we're just like any other program in Canada; we're getting per capita funding. If the infrastructure goes up or some money goes up, it's shared up across the country on a per capita basis.

If you look back at some of the expenses in regard to what our expenditures are and you look at those dating back to 2015-2016, we know the biggest contributor to our expenses is health care and the challenges we have with health care. We know the new health and social transfer – the three main transfers for the federal government, I guess, are health, social transfers and equalization. Equalization, we're not getting very much on that, but on health and social transfers, the health, if I remember correctly a number of years ago, there were discussions by the various provinces and I think the Harper government had talked about at the time, I think there was 6 per cent in terms of growth in health care spending in Canada and what the transfer would be to the provinces. The negotiation was they wanted to keep it at 6 per cent and then they had negotiations after the new prime minister came in.

I think the old Harper government had recommended going down to 3 per cent and the current administration, Prime Minister Trudeau had gone with that, the 3 per cent. I remember at the time there was discussions and our Premier went up and other premiers went up and they talked about 3 per cent wasn't enough and they weren't going to sign. But then shortly after, they went out of the room and they were all lined up signing the 3 per cent.

My understanding right now is 3 per cent or up to 3 per cent based on economic indicators, that's how federal funding to the provinces for health care every year, that's the formula that's in place. We saw some moderate increase in transfers from the federal government for health care, so I assume that's the 3 per cent or something close to it that brings it up to a small increase. Social transfers, I think it's the same thing. There's a calculation done to bring it up. So there's really no new money in that just for Newfoundland and Labrador. That's just money on a per capita basis or on a formula basis for all jurisdictions in Canada when that's done.

The other item is the cost and spending and expenditures, what that relates to. So you go back to 2015, the revised 2014-2015 was roughly \$7.9 billion and that was our last year. Then in 2015-2016, it went to \$8.0 billion. In 2016 it was revised to about \$8.1 billion. In budget 2016-2017, it went to \$8.4 billion. That's our expenses. So that's \$8.4 billion and then we get to 2017 it was revised to \$8.4 billion budget, went down a little to \$8.1 billion and the budget for this year, in terms of overall expenses, is almost up to \$8.4 billion again.

When you talk about reducing expenditures and critical of some of the things we had done, it doesn't bear fruit when you look at the actual numbers and what's transpired since this administration has come in in 2016.

The other interesting thing when you go back and look at the previous budgets – and I reference the federal government and while we continuously hear about the investments being made and the extra investments being made and our great relationship with Ottawa and what's that doing for us, it's interesting when we go back and look. In 2015, health and social transfers were about 9.9 per cent. Other federal resources were about 6.5 per cent. So total federal transfers were 6.5 per cent, when you go back and look at the budget documentations for prior years. That was 2015.

If you look at 2016, actually it went down – no, sorry, it went up to 17.5 per cent. So about a percentage point. From 16.5 per cent to 17.5 per cent, and the health and social transfers were 10.6 per cent and other transfers about 6.9 per cent.

When you go through and look at these years, really, the per cent or half per cent increase in federal government expenditures or funds coming to this province is solely related to a formula for social transfers, or for health transfers. It's not based on any new money that's been directed toward Newfoundland and Labrador. It's based on a per capita basis and it's based on a formula that's already in place.

If you look at 2017, and you look at the expenditures as well, the federal government from that perspective, I think in *Budget 2016* it was 17.5 per cent, in *Budget 2017* it's 17.1 per cent. So it went down 0.4 per cent. If we look at the documents that were presented yesterday in regard to federal transfers and where we are, again, the health and social transfers are about 9.7 per cent and the other federal transfers are about 7.3 per cent. So that means about 17 per cent.

When you look at the numbers in total from federal transfers: *Budget 2015* it was 16.5 per cent; budget '16 it was 17.5 per cent; budget '17 was 17.1 per cent, and *Budget 2018* was 17 per cent. Really, there's been no change in terms of overall contribution to Newfoundland and Labrador from the federal government; yet, we seem to hear a different story. In actual fact, the numbers don't bear that out.

Now that's related to health and social transfers and other federal sources. Those federal sources could mean being able to leverage federal dollars for things like infrastructure, small crafts and harbours, a whole range of initiatives. Again, as I said, that's on a per capita basis.

We look at our taxation levels and where our revenue comes from, that as well is significant because that ties back to what we talked about in terms of the economy and doing what we need to do. We're almost 51 per cent in regard to where the taxation comes from. We're picking up 51 per cent from business, from the economy, from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and taking it out of their pockets. That's where it's coming from. That's directly tied to the economy, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and trying to make sure we can drive the economy and make use of the targets that have been outlined by this current administration

in regard to some of the things they are talking about.

We talked about the transfers. One of the ones we've had a discussion about for the past while is related to equalization and some of the initiatives in regard to that and some of the actions that have been taken or not taken by the current administration.

I'll say upfront, and I've talked to this over the past couple of years and asked questions here in the House. I know in the initial budget of this government in 2016, I think the minister at the time – or maybe it was 2018 – referenced the fact of the unfairness and what's happening in that. Really, in the first two years that side wasn't allowed to talk about equalization, wasn't allowed to discuss it.

I think the Premier said at one point: it is what it is, we can't ask Ottawa. With the dramatic cut in a barrel of oil, I know the Premier of Alberta, the Premier of Saskatchewan were quick to ask about the three-year rolling average for qualifying for equalization and to get you in. It wasn't really receptive of a dramatic drop in oil prices and how negatively that affected – I don't think there has ever been in Canada a type of reduction that transpired over that period of time that affected Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

There was a lobby started by two of those jurisdictions with the federal government – we never took part – to look at is there a means or mechanisms to do that. Under the formula there is a small caveat, is my understanding, to look at the whole fiscal piece related to the dramatic drop in oil prices. I think when the calculation was done it was only about \$30 million that we could get access to in regard to that.

We had said and lobbied: Well, let's start the discussion. Let's at least start the discussion on equalization. I think 2019 is the period to start, but with that three-year moving average and with two years in between –

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

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

The noise level in the House is a little high. I ask Members to keep their comments low, unless they're speaking.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Yes, indeed, and there's more to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So with the whole equalization piece in regard to lobbying and advocating the formula as it's set up now, and most people agree, it doesn't reflect changes in Atlantic Canada, changes in demographics and the direction we're going, and it's based on a per capita basis. When you look at some of the challenges we have in regard to delivery of service and the demographics of where we're going, I think everyone agrees it needs to be looked at. It's not fair. It's not fair for Newfoundland and Labrador and it's not fair for other jurisdictions. I think we really need to look at the caveat of natural resources and what's included in the calculation and the fiscal capacity. The last time we signed 50 per cent of oil royalties would be used in that fiscal capacity.

When you look at that and non-renewable resources that are allowed into the fiscal capacity, and then you compare it to the non-renewable that's not included, and particularly related to Quebec – and nothing particular against Quebec, but they've been able to avail of a program and avail of it to an extreme advantage to them. So right now, as an example, the hydro from Upper Churchill, the figures in regard to what Quebec has earned is in excess of \$20 billion on that and Newfoundland and Labrador probably a billion and a half over that same period of time. But in the calculation right now, those revenues that they've derived from our river, Upper Churchill, that's not included in their fiscal capacity, in the calculation. Yet ours, in regard to natural resources, 50 per cent is indeed included.

Further to that, my understanding is Hydro-Québec does a whole range of leasing of property to the provincial government, which again generates revenue through Hydro-Québec,

but it's not included in the overall fiscal capacity in terms of determining what ability provinces have to raise revenue and, in doing that, under the constitution of Canada, it is that you provide reasonable level of taxation for reasonable level of services. That's a fundamental principle. And if you can't do that, the equalization program is supposed to be responsive to the needs of that particular province.

So what we saw here in the province in 2016, and continuing, is a very increased level of taxation that is hindering the province, hindering growth, hindering a province where people want to do business, entrepreneurs want to invest, people want to live and raise their families, we want to attract people here so all of that – and that's a decision that the current government made in regard to the level of taxation and their ability to drive and create the environment for economic activity, but the general principle of the equalization is that that shouldn't happen. There should be a means there to address that in what transpires in regard to the economy. It's much more reflective than a five-year period where you have a three-period to review the data, you have two years then after that before it's implemented.

I think the fiscal capacity issue needs to be changed and also the fiscal cap, which looks at how much is taken into consideration in regard to revenue generation. As I said Newfoundland and Labrador, 50 per cent of our natural resources, non-renewable resources, are introduced on part of that.

I talked about the payments from Ottawa, the three streams. I talked about two of them but if you look at equalization in 2018-2019 and what's going to flow to some of the provinces, the equalization pot this year in 2018-2019 is almost \$19 billion. It's \$18.9 billion.

When you look at those that are receiving it, significant dollars: Prince Edward Island, \$419 million. I'll look at the Atlantic provinces: Nova Scotia, \$1.9 billion. Nova Scotia just recently brought down a budget and showed a surplus with a \$1.9 billion equalization number; New Brunswick, again very high, almost \$1.9 billion in equalization payments. Quebec, this year, will receive \$11.7 billion. Last year, it was a little over \$11 billion. So \$700 million it's gone up,

which is amazing when you think about it. We don't want to talk about it here.

The federal support to Ontario, under the third phase of transfers from the federal government, equalization, at \$963 million. Ontario in the past number of years dating back to 2013-2014, \$3.1 billion; the following year, \$1.9 billion; \$2.3 billion; 2016-2017, \$2.3 billion; 2017-2018, \$1.4 billion; and this year will receive \$963 million. So that's just a framework when we talk about equalization, transfers and those types of things that we need to do.

As I said, we've been vocal on that. We've asked the current administration to take a look and get our local MPs to make the case. I think there was a case made. Many of the articles that have been done – even the parliamentary officer in Ottawa just recently did a review, looked at the cases, and looked at the various provisions of – what if you changed some variables of the equalization formula? What if you took the cap off for natural resources? What if you included renewable resources into the calculation? What would that mean for various jurisdictions?

With various changes to that, there would be significant changes for Newfoundland and Labrador ranging currently anywhere from \$300 million to \$500 million that would flow to Newfoundland and Labrador with a revised equalization formula. So think about that today, at the very least if we had \$300 million, \$400 million, \$500 million to \$1.6 million, \$1.7 million like Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, that would get us to the principle that enshrined in the constitution of reasonable levels of taxation for reasonable levels of services, instead of dealing with these in excess of 300 taxes and fees – which there's another coming down the pipe this year of a carbon tax, which really nobody is talking about or nobody is really giving much detail in this budget for what it's going to mean for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and what it's going to mean for our economy. Apparently, there's no analysis done of that and what it's going to mean for us.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that drives economic activity – and I spoke to it briefly – is personal income tax rates both on a federal and provincial level, and again how that speaks to the incentive for people to be part of this

province, want to stay here, and want to be part of growing the economy which is hugely important for the long term and usually important if government has any possibility of reaching its targets it set out yesterday and has talked about for the past number of years in regard to getting to 2022-23 and getting into a surplus.

Some of the things we talk about in offshore oil production is varied in regard to what happens. The Hebron oil project is expected to be in production and ramp up in the next several years. We have an expectation that oil production is going to move up. Minerals on one side from that perspective, there's some good news there in that.

One of the major concerns is capital investment. The capital investments over the past number of years in various projects we've done, megaprojects. Where are we going from here? We have Muskrat Falls that will be winding down. There are over 4,000 people employed with that. When you look at the various companies and those types of things that are engaged and the spinoff from that, that's one of the major indicators that's of significant concern in how we fill that void as we move forward. There was nothing in the budget yesterday in regard to an announcement on how that void is going to be filled or what the incentives are to do it.

I mentioned earlier about Voisey's Bay and the underground mine, there's nothing on that. I spoke about the Grieg project that we left off, as a MOU was in place. That hasn't progressed yet; significant ones to look at in regard to the economy and how it flows ahead. Concerns, as I mentioned earlier too, in regard to particular tariffs related to NAFTA and the free trade agreement, the negotiation of that and how that's going to affect significant industries here in the province. Capital investment is extremely important, where that's going.

To that point, in our oil and gas sector, we had discussions too, a while back, in regard to new environmental assessments that have been done by the federal government and that's coming our way. A lot of concerns by Noia with what that's going to mean by making it attractive and the

timelines to get, especially, exploration operational.

We look at the process in oil companies around the world coming here and you look at what we've done. Our administration invested heavily in seismic work and through that we were able to establish data in what's offshore and use that data to sell it to – or not sell it to, but make it available to those companies and they can make informed decisions about prospectivity and what's actually out there.

We have some control as well as to what's out there. We've seen record land sales in the past number of years related to that and because of that, because of that investment. Having said that, that's good to have, but to get to the next step, I mean they'll do their exploratory work, but to continue the land sales – they were down a little in the last year – you can't have barriers. You can't have barriers to allow that development or exploration to occur.

Some of the main concerns expressed in regard to this new environmental assessment is it could slow down exploration. It gets heavy on the regulatory side of things in terms of who can engage in a process to give perspective on an environmental assessment and what transpires.

That's a concern of the industry and I think it's going to affect or could affect our industry and we really need to have a good discussion with the federal government and be strong in our advocacy to make sure that the intent of the 1985 Atlantic Accord ensures jurisdiction, regulatory framework. The C-NLOPB has functioned here to oversee our oil and gas sector over the past number of years and we have equal representation. That should be the entity to do environmental assessments.

I know the minister has commented on that in the public before in regard to her preference. I think, as a government on that side, they need to continue that. If that breaks ranks with their federal colleagues, well, so be it, because the issue here is Newfoundland and Labrador, the building of our industry to making sure our oil and gas sector continues to flow. It has to continue to flow.



That's one of the variables that we have to ensure it doesn't negatively affect our industry because we get back to the same point in terms of the projections and generating wealth and where wealth is coming from and all of those things. It's all tied in. We can't have frameworks in place that's not supporting what we need to do here in Newfoundland and Labrador. As I said, industry groups, I've spoken to them myself in terms of concerns they have and how we move this forward.

Now, speaking of that side of it; yesterday and I guess the day preceding, the minister talked about, I think there's a move afoot – and there wasn't much detail in the budget in regard to Nalcor and separating out the oil and gas entity within Nalcor and those groups of entities that are there. Not a lot of detail. I'm not sure of the rationale. Is it a cost?

There was talk about branding. I'm not sure about branding. We've had huge success with the oil and gas sector in this province – huge success. When we look at the wells, we look at the exploration that's gone on, talked about land sales, talked about the seismic work that was done, talked about the activity in our offshore and continuing to move that. I'm not sure if branding or what the actual rationale was for it. Is there a cost associated to it?

The entity of Nalcor would hold renewable and the non-renewable resources of our province – the energy cluster of everything we have. Taking one out and pulling it out and bringing it in to a line department. Right now it's been a Crown corporation. The expertise is there, they've developed the knowledge, they've got corporate knowledge, they have all of that and it's intertwined with all of the assets that we use for energy and energy production. And really, it was modelled after what we see in Norway and other areas of the world in regard to bringing that cluster together and that shared perspective and synergies that can be used for that.

So I guess, in the days ahead, we'll get some enlightenment in regard to where that's to, what it's all about, and how it holds best for Newfoundland and Labrador. Because, at the end, that's what we're all concerned about, to make sure that we can make sure we can move ahead.

Yesterday as well in the budget there was one component – and we had a lot of discussion here in regard to the legalization of cannabis. I know the Leader of the Opposition has asked a lot of questions in regard to the readiness of that. I guess this is another issue where the big hand from Ottawa comes down and tells you we're going to do this and here it is and go do it, a centralized view. And a time frame was put in place to do this.

I know yesterday in the budget, if I remember correctly, there was \$2 million, in terms of the revenue stream, that's supposed to be generated by the sale of cannabis here in the province. Now, I know there were a lot of questions asked here in regard to, well, what's the cost-benefit done, where are the evidence-based decisions – if we've heard that once, we've heard it 1,000 times over the past three years from across the floor. Yet when we ask the question about show us the projections of sales, show us the projections of returns on taxation, show us the cost of implementing it – there's \$40 million in remittances from Canopy Growth, their decision made with Canopy Growth in terms of them coming to the province, and there's \$40 million over a period of time that they're going to get. But how does that factor in to the bigger picture? What's the return to the people?

One of the important questions that were asked was: Is this going to cost the taxpayer of Newfoundland and Labrador anything to implement this? We still don't have the answer. All we saw yesterday was a reference to a \$2.2 million revenue line – no idea where it's coming from, what it's based on. So hopefully over the next discussion days, weeks we get into the budget we'll get some clear idea of what that's all about and where it's coming from.

Interestingly enough, Nova Scotia tabled a budget just recently and they factored in almost \$30 million, \$29.4 million relying heavily on cannabis sales. Now, we're nowhere near that, obviously, at \$2 million; but again, it's nice to see, as we move forward in the weeks ahead, from the minister, exactly what the details are and how that's going to roll out. I know we talked about there's a component of education, certainly for our youth, educating our youth in regard to the use of cannabis. There's the side of addictions; the *Highway Traffic Act*,

enforcement. There's a lot of discussion in the country about how you determine if somebody is under the influence of cannabis. Right now, my understanding is there's no definitive test or blood test or anything that can be done to definitively say that someone is under the influence of cannabis.

There's also the issue of the use by our youth. Many in the science community and medical professionals would say that the human brain continues to develop till the age of 25, but my understanding is the legalization is a lot younger than that. That poses concerns and we need to have that discussion. Some of the data that's coming forward about those results is certainly concerning as well.

So the whole financial side of it is of concern and that certainly needs to be brought to light in the days and weeks ahead as we go through all of this.

As I've spoken earlier this morning and started off and talked about those industries and all the ones that are important to Newfoundland and Labrador and tied it into the fiscal plan of this administration over the past seven years and what was announced yesterday, there really was nothing announced yesterday to give any hope or direction to why – I heard someone gave the example, so you have a young family now with two kids that are in school. They're in sports. They're in activities. Prior to yesterday if they were thinking about leaving or they were thinking about making more decisions, what would have been in the budget yesterday or what direction would have been given or plan laid out for them to say no, we think there's opportunity and we're going to stick around.

I don't think there was a lot. I think we need to continue to make that environment. I didn't get to some of the economic indicators and where they're going, but that's not the picture that I think we need to see going forward. If we don't get there, it's not going to be for the benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Collectively, across on all sides, we want what's best for Newfoundland and Labrador. We may not agree on everything, but I think we do want what's best. I guess the rule is: How do we get there? So I think there'll be a lot of questions in

the weeks ahead and I look forward to having that debate.

Mr. Speaker, normally, on Wednesdays, we adjourn activity at this particular time. So I'd like to put forward that I adjourn debate at this time on budget and will pick it up at the next sitting of the House.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Trimper):** In accordance with paragraph 9(1)(b) of the Standing Orders, we will adjourn until 2 o'clock.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

In the public gallery today, I would like to welcome family and friends of Michael Jones. He is the subject of a Member's statement.

Welcome to you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Also watching the House of Assembly over the live stream, I would like to send special greetings to the students and staff of St. Paul's Junior High School here in St. John's. They will be mentioned in a Member's statement today.

Welcome to you.

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

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** For Members' statements today, we will hear from the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl North, Labrador West, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville and Cape St. Francis.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

**MR. LESTER:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Visions Employment Plus Incorporated

for the valuable service they provide to their clients.

Established in October 1994, they are a not-for-profit, community-based employment corporation providing employment services and supports to individuals with a primary diagnosis of intellectual disability.

Visions Employment's objective is to provide the supports and services necessary in the creation of equal employment opportunities for their clients while providing ongoing support and assistance in the monitoring and maintenance of existing employment placements.

Their client population is unemployed adults and youth with a primary diagnosis of an intellectual disability eligible for services under the Labor Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities who face barriers to employment. Employment partnerships and services extend throughout the City of Mount Pearl and surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Visions Employment and their sponsors for all the valuable work that they do for their clients.

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to pay tribute to Gordon Parsons, a legend and patriot of Labrador.

Mark Twain once said, "Never pick a fight with someone who buys ink by the barrel." Such was the case with Gord when he was editor and owner of *The Aurora* newspaper, but he was fair.

Gord was born in St. John's, educated in Flatrock, moved to Goose Bay in 1963 and to Labrador West in 1973. Gord quickly adopted Labrador as his new home and he became immersed in the many activities of the Big Land. He was part of the first group to travel Route 389 to Baie-Comeau and the Trans-Labrador

Highway to Happy Valley-Goose Bay long before they were called highways.

Gord's many interests included birdwatching, ham radios, pistol and rifle shooting, photography, and especially the environment, and he became active in all organizations associated with them. Gord loved the Labrador land and its wildlife, especially birds, but most of all he loved its people. Gord passed away on March 15 at the age of 73 years.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in the celebration of a life gone way too soon.

Rest in peace, my friend.

**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 stand on March 28, what would have been the 74th birthday of Michael John Jones – father, grandfather, brother, uncle, visionary filmmaker, inspirer and mentor especially of young people – had Mike lived two more weeks.

His untimely death has brought to the general public the man behind the scenes, the co-founder of the filmmakers co-operative, NIFCO, known to his peers as the godfather of filmmaking in this province – a multi-million dollar industry now that began with the iconic *The Adventure of Faustus Bidgood*, the making of which in itself was an adventure. As described by brother Andy Jones, "the crazy best outta control scariest most passionate thing I have ever done and the closest attempt at pure art that I was ever involved in." What a description of Mike's life and work.

I ask the Members of this House to join Mike's family, friends and colleagues in the film industry as they celebrate his life and grieve the loss of this vital person.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

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

I, too, would like to welcome the students and staff of St. Paul's.

I rise in this hon. House to congratulate the students and staff of St. Paul's Junior High on the fantastic Spring Fling this past weekend. This celebration is an annual event organized by the students each spring with close to 400 people from the community in attendance and it was a resounding success.

With the theme, Movie Music and More, the students played classic numbers such as the Mission Impossible theme song to more recent songs like How Far I'll Go, from Moana. From small groups performances and a cappella choir to string and percussion ensembles, the talent shown by these students is amazing and keeps getting better.

This show had the audience laughing and singing along, making it an enjoyable afternoon for everyone involved. All in attendance were treated to a wonderful assortment of desserts to enjoy as well as numerous unique auction items. It was an exciting end to a magnificent event. The Spring Fling would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the entire school community.

Thank you to the students, teachers, staff and all volunteers who were involved in this first-class production. Always remember: Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I rise today to congratulate the Northeast Eagles who, on March 6, edged past the St. John's Caps

to win the Don Johnson Hockey League Atom B crown.

Mr. Speaker, it was a very special win for the Eagles, not only because it was the first time the team has won from the Northeast Eagles Minor Hockey Association, the crown, but it was also winning in front of their hometown fans, and a great crowd it was at the Jack Byrne Arena.

The Northeast Eagles consist of nine and 10 year old children from Torbay, Flatrock, Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, Pouch Cove and Portugal Cove-St. Philips.

Members of the winning team were: Evan Adams, Cameron Boland, Sam Chaulk, Ethan Fardy, Maria Groves, Alex Hickey, Drew Hudson, Olivia King, Alexander Maynard, Lucas Mitchelmore, Ryan Mouland, Dawson Parsons, Owen Parsons, Liam Rose, Nathan Ross, AJ Simms and Mark Youden. This wonderful group was coached by Keith Maynard, Blair Boland and Ian Rose.

Mr. Speaker, the Eagles were already having a great season. In January they won gold at the Canadian Hockey Enterprise tournament in Montreal.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Northeast Eagles on a successful season and wishing the team good luck in their upcoming provincial tournament in Harbour Grace this Easter.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**MR. BYRNE:** The incredible outdoor heritage we all share in Newfoundland and Labrador is a source of both pride and enjoyment for so many of our province's outdoor enthusiasts.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure this common heritage is made even more accessible to us all, our

government has made a number of progressive changes to expand hunting opportunities and benefits to even more Newfoundland and Labradorians.

By lowering the hunting age from 18 to 16 for big game, and 16 to 12 for small game, Mr. Speaker, we bring youth closer to the resource while they learn valuable life and conservation lessons from adult mentors who accompany them in the field. We've improved access to hunting for people with disabilities by amending the designated hunter regulations. We adjusted the big game licence draw so people can apply earlier.

I remind everyone, Mr. Speaker, in this House and outside, that the deadline for submitting big game licence draw applications is tomorrow, March 29, at 4:30 p.m. Eligible hunters are encouraged to return completed applications to the department offices, or apply online, which provides immediate confirmation that the application has been received and is the quickest way to apply.

Mr. Speaker, we are on target to print and mail notices of successful applicants by early May of this year.

We are also ensuring big game harvests continue to be available to community groups. This year, a letter from the executive of the community group in question will be required before a licence will be issued. This ensures the integrity of each application and increasing our focus on conversation.

*The 2018-19 Hunting & Trapping Guide*, Mr. Speaker, is now available online and can be viewed on mobile devices. Details of the changes and information on regulations and safe hunting practices are available now with the click of a button.

Mr. Speaker, being able to spend time outdoors – whether in solitude, or with family and friends, passing on the enjoyment, the life skills of hunting and trapping and sharing our common outdoor heritage, is very important to us all. I even believe it's what defines us as who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. LESTER:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The Official Opposition agrees with the concepts and prerogatives put forth by your department. The lowering of age, in particular, is a responsible manner that can be beneficial to our province's youth, as hunting is an important aspect of our cultural fabric.

As was noted, it promotes valuable life and conservation lessons throughout our society, but of course it must be done through appropriate mentorship and guidance from experienced adults.

Mr. Speaker, while these are positive moves, the minister can't lose focus on other key parts of his department. Issues concerning our province's caribou herds need immediate attention, as do concerning reports regarding lack of enforcement on our province's rivers.

So I say to the minister, great job, take a moment to pat yourself on the back, but do not take too much time because there's much work to be done.

Thank you, 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, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. It's great to see youth and people with disabilities being given greater opportunities to embrace our tradition of hunting, trapping and living off the land, particularly among indigenous communities.

While adult mentors are essential in teaching youth valuable life and conservation lessons, government also has a role in ensuring all those who take part in this tradition are educated and

knowledgeable on the appropriate safety precautions.

I wish all those taking part this year a safe and successful hunting season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to highlight initiatives undertaken by the Department of Transportation and Works for increasing highway safety over the winter season.

Earlier this month, we expanded the Provincial Plow Tracker service to include all depots on the Island part of the province and will continue to work to expand this service to the Labrador region.

This service has seen significant use this year and is a useful tool to help motorists plan safer trips during the winter months.

In recent weeks, we expanded our use of technology to help motorists make informed decisions before travelling by adding two new highway cameras – one on the Trans-Canada Highway at Whitbourne and another on Route 210 near Terrenceville – for a total of 33 highway cameras motorists can now view online. We will be adding an additional four cameras in the coming year.

This year, we also introduced the province's first-ever tow plow on the Avalon Peninsula – an innovative piece of equipment that plows and salts two lanes at the same time. This is an initiative we will be expanding on for the next winter season.

Mr. Speaker, in *Budget 2016*, we announced we would schedule overnight snow clearing shifts on nights when weather conditions warranted it. Crews throughout the 13 routes were out overnight more than 200 times this season. We

also took advantage of mild temperatures during the day to make road repairs that would otherwise not be possible in colder temperatures.

Mr. Speaker, even though winter has ended and spring is upon us, we encourage motorists to continue to prepare for winter driving conditions, as we all know too well that inclement weather can still lead to hazardous driving conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador – even in April and May.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we should all commend the efforts of our more than 700 professionals who work at all hours and in severe conditions to keep our provinces highways safe and clear.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and for the update on the winter maintenance activities. Mr. Speaker, we are always pleased to hear any practices of services that will improve road safety for the travelling public in our province.

The plow tracker is a useful tool and the additional highway cameras can be used throughout the year to evaluate highway conditions. I was interested to hear the snow clearing crews were out overnight more than 200 times this season. This provides further evidence that your cuts to 24-hour snow clearing was an ill-advised decision.

I look forward now to the summer maintenance activities and seeing the many, many potholes in our province disappear.

Thank you very much, 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, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** It's good to see these new initiatives. I'd be interested, however, in seeing numbers on how many are accessing the online plow tracker service. I think it's a good service. I'd like to know how many are using it.

I hope the 200 overnight snow-clearing shifts were enough to keep our roads safe. That doesn't tell me anything, Mr. Speaker. People often have no choice when they have to travel the highways and they have to know that the roads are safe at all times.

Most of all, I commend the 700 professionals who do work night and day to keep motorists safe, often under very trying conditions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I rise today in this hon. House to recognize the College of the North Atlantic's leadership role in a new project through the federally funded initiative, the Kenya Education for Employment Project.

The college's project is a partnership with two of Kenya's national polytechnics, the Kebede Polytechnic Training College in Nairobi and the North Eastern National Polytechnic in Garissa. Together they will help create national competency-based occupational standards for Kenya in automotive technology and industrial automation. The partnership will focus on developing industry-approved training programs that prepare graduates for work in these demand-driven sectors.

The college is engaging with industry in Newfoundland and Labrador and Kenya to participate in the development of the new occupational standards. For example, Lemur Monitors in Mount Pearl is an official partner and has donated equipment.

I am pleased to inform my hon. colleagues that Kenyan officials will be visiting our province in May to learn more about the college's facilities, training models, best practices and to experience our local culture.

This exciting project will enable the College of the North Atlantic and local employers to make new connections in Kenya and assist in the development of one of Africa's largest economies.

Please join me in congratulating the College of the North Atlantic on its participation in the Kenya Education for Employment Project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I would like to this opportunity to recognize the role the College of the North Atlantic is playing in the Kenya Education for Employment Project. I'm pleased to see the College of the North Atlantic is engaging with industry and taking part in such initiatives. It is our hope that this will lead to greater opportunities for the college system.

This side of the House welcomes the Kenyan officials who will be arriving in May, and we all know they will be impressed with CNA and the students.

I congratulate the college and its officials on their participation in the Kenya Education for Employment Project.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the copy of his statement. It's good to hear that the college is continuing to expand their work and sharing their expertise with developing countries. It is also good to see the college engaging private companies in the industry to participate by sharing both equipment and expertise.

Making new connections, whether in Kenya or any other place in the world, is good for the college, local business either here or in a participating country, as well as a rich and rewarding experience for the people involved.

Thank you very much, 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, in October, 2017 the new Finance Minister said that we need to fix the spending problem. So I ask the Premier: Why does your *Budget 2018* forecast an increase in spending to \$8.4 billion this year?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we know the Opposition's ability to do budgets; it got us a \$2.7 billion deficit.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** The reality, Mr. Speaker, there's \$140 million included in this year's budget which is fully, 100 per cent, federally funded programs. If you take that out, there's \$24 million for inquiries, you take that out and

the tens of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, for CPI increases, I think we've done even better than holding spending stable.

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

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

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

Yes, the federal government has increased spending right across the country; it's not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador. It's something the federal government is doing from coast to coast, Mr. Speaker. But *Budget 2018* indicates that the province's spending of \$8.4 billion will outpace revenues of \$7.67 billion that the province will take in, in 2018.

So I ask the Premier to tell us how does this represent responsible, fiscal decisions that benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

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

Well, to the Member opposite, first of all, I think if we go back nearly three years ago in 2016 when we put in place what was a seven-year plan to get this province back to surplus, we saw the former Minister of Finance, the current Minister of Finance – Mr. Speaker, we are hitting all forecasts. As a matter of fact, we've had to include some extra expense, one of which was as a result of the decision of the former administration, upwards of \$200 million in rate mitigation.

Today, as I stand here and we talk about budgets, I'm talking about rate mitigation for the largest tax, the Tory tax, in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker, and this government will not be taking financial advice from the former administration.

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

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

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



Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier just said we're meeting all forecasts – not true, Mr. Speaker, not true. Their own deficit for this year was forecast to be \$778 million. It's increased now to \$812 million.

So, Premier, explain how that's meeting your forecast.

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

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

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

Well, it's been explained, and it was explained yesterday by the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker. It's about severance. That was another factor we had to put into our seven-year forecast to keep this province back to surplus. On top of that, we gave back on auto insurance. There's some giving back to the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget, as the Minister of Finance just pointed out, what we inherited was from the former administration a \$2.7 billion looming deficit. This government is meeting its targets. We are on forecast to return to surplus in the next four years.

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

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

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

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

Another misleading statement by the Premier who says their giving back on the auto insurance. They're not doing anything with auto insurance this year. It doesn't come into effect until next year, Mr. Speaker, and we see that in the budget.

The Auditor General has agreed with the current Finance Minister and the previous Finance minister who said that we have a spending problem.

So I ask the Premier: Why did you allow the Departments of Service NL, Transportation and Works, Advanced Education, Skills and Labour,

Municipal Affairs, Finance and others to surplus and increase their budgets this year? Two hundred million dollars additional spending this year, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Some of that is related to CPI, of course. When you look at the Estimates and you look at the expenses that we have within this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, part of it is salaries. You've heard the Minister of Finance and others talk at length about this. But we also procure – we actually buy things as well. So we are keeping expenses in line. Not like we saw through the former administration who saw ballooning – ballooning – expenses over their administration.

So again I say, Mr. Speaker, the Members opposite are certainly not the ones to be giving financial advice to this province. Their plan expects oil to be over \$80 a barrel this year.

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

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

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

Well, let's not forget the name on the door of the Premier's office is that man over there, Mr. Speaker. Three years – three years – it's been his responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier opposite just said they're meeting all their forecasts. Well, the minister's own economic policy document right here with all the economic forecast, show that all of the economic indicators are going in the wrong direction: housing starts, unemployment, disposable income and more, all going in the wrong direction.

So I'll ask the Premier: How can you say that that these decisions you're making benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

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

Well, this is how I say it, Mr. Speaker; this is exactly how I would say it. I'll repeat the words of the former premier because it was in his economic indicators back in 2015. It was the former premier that actually said the population in this year would be 520,000 people, Mr. Speaker. I'll repeat the words of the former premier. He said today, in 2018, the population would be 520,000 people.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report, as the efforts of this government, the population in this province is over 525,000 people.

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

**PREMIER BALL:** So when he says that people are leaving in droves, Mr. Speaker, he is wrong. It is what he predicted in 2015, it's not what's happening today.

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

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

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

What a good piece of information to point out from the Premier because forecasts were higher than they are since three years of Liberal government, Mr. Speaker, because under their government now they predict 11,000 people are going to leave Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, that's the size of Gander, going to leave our province since their watch, since he came into power.

I ask the Premier this: What is in *Budget 2018* that encourages Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, especially young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, what's in the budget that encourages them to stay here in this province right here?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Just a warning to everyone, please. I will not tolerate interruptions when somebody has been identified to speak – final warning.

The hon. the Premier.

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

Well, I can understand why the former premier would want to distance himself from his own economic indicators that he put out in 2015 because they were a failure. What they didn't include also was the looming impact of the Muskrat Falls Project.

What we have put in place, Mr. Speaker, and it's working, is *Our Way Forward*. We introduced our vision in November 2016 making key strategic investments in those areas of our province where we see creating jobs is a priority for us.

They had 10 years to set this province up for success. They refused to do it by spending the \$25 billion that they had available to them. They invested in Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, thinking there was going to be a return to the people of our province. In fact, what they were doing was digging deeper into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

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

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

For three years, the government over there has been saying they have a spending problem. They're refusing to deal with it. I wonder if that's a fiscal decision or is it actually a political decision. Because *Budget 2016*, let's not forget, put 300 fee and tax increases on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, 50 brand new fees, Mr. Speaker. And guess what? Budget '17 kept those fees in place and budget '18 kept those fees in place.

We've seen *Budget 2016* for three years now, Premier, what are you going to do for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

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

I'd like to say to many seniors and people on low income in our province, there's \$121 million, Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget for that.

Mr. Speaker, there is some relief for auto insurance, but let's not forget – I would be ashamed if I was the former premier as well. He mentioned already about the name on the door. There's a reason why that name is not on the door.

I will tell you now, Mr. Speaker, we are making provisions for the future of our province. We put a plan in place. That plan is working. We are meeting our targets to return this province back to surplus in seven years, taking into account and cleaning up the mess that they have let for this government.

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

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

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, household income is dropping, real household income is dropping. Retail sales from now to 2021 are predicted to drop. Consumer price index is continuing to increase. Capital investment is predicted to decrease. Housing starts will decrease 10 per cent, and then 10 per cent over the next couple of years and continue to decrease in years to come. Those are all their own predictions, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: How can you say that your plan and your workings are working for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? It's hurting them and driving them out of the province.

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

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

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

Well, there's no doubt, the Leader of the Opposition will indeed like to twist some words, but I'll repeat his words one more time because capital investment – these were the words of the former premier in 2015, Mr. Speaker. He was

saying that capital investment in our province would be 8.465 and these are in the millions of dollars, of course.

Well, in actual fact, in 2018 this government has improved the capital investment up to 9.7. That's a big improvement to what this former premier said would happen in 2015. We are making improvements and setting this province up for a great future.

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

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

Order, please!

**MR. LESTER:** Mr. Speaker, last year the former Finance minister promoted a zero-based budgeting approach; yet, this year there was not one mention of zero-based budgeting.

I ask the minister: Have you abandoned the zero-based budgeting approach?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** No.

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

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

**MR. LESTER:** Thank you for that detailed answer.

The Finance Minister said yesterday that he would continue to look for savings which included reducing their discretionary spending.

How can there still be discretionary spending when your previous Finance minister went through the budget line by line to identify savings?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Agencies, boards and commissions, I say to the Member.

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

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

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

The minister said that the cost of severance for NAPE is \$250 million; yet, the budget handout only accounts for \$89 million.

Minister, can you explain?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is yes.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, the Opposition doesn't know how to budget. They didn't know how to budget when they were there. We got \$2.7 billion in deficit that they handed over to the people of the province, the gift that keeps on giving.

Mr. Speaker, that's to account for the one to eight years which are dealt with in this year's budget, the '17-'18 budget and the '18-'19 budget. The other amounts were on the books as liabilities and are dealt with in a different way.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** You had noted earlier that it was a one-time payout, now it's going to be stretched over other fiscals. So that does have an impact on the bottom line here in our debt levels.

Is there money in the budget for a payout of severance to employees outside of NAPE, and how much?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Yes.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** I guess we'll have a really in-depth debate when it comes to Estimates so that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get the real answers that they deserve.

The minister said that the payout to NAPE will cost \$250 million, the budget handout says \$89 million, the Budget Speech states \$600 million and the Estimates book read \$359 million.

Minister, what is the real cost of the severance payout on the backs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the crowd opposite obviously doesn't know the difference between liabilities and the one-time cash payments.

The one-time cash payments are the one to eight years which is what you see in last year's budget \$39 million, and this year's budget \$52 million. The remainder of the \$600 million – that is included in the \$600 million. The remainder of it is on the books as liabilities and will be paid out over – the majority of it over two years, 90 per cent.

I've been very clear, including in the media, that we've given an option to people to take it at a later date if they wish. We expect somewhere upwards to 10 per cent of that, which is the 10 per cent will be over several years.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** So I'm a bit confused. I'm good on numbers because I have an accounting background and I was with the unions for a number of years. I'm a little bit confused because a number of these collective agreements have not been negotiated yet. So you haven't finalized the numbers here. You haven't outlined exactly under which headings that this money is going to come out.

Can you clarify exactly – are you going to impose the same ratification on the other

unions? And, if so, you must have an accounting number now to be able to say exactly how much for each of these unions is going to be costed when it comes to the severance payout.

Just a quick clarification, it should be in the budget lines.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we did include severance payouts for all unions. We're not presupposing what those will be.

I find it funny that the Member said he's good at numbers, he's good at accounting. Mr. Speaker, that's the very Member that forgot to add to the bill, when he bought two new ferries, a wharf in his own district, the very district he represents. We got a boat and had to put it in dry dock while we built the wharf that he forgot to build.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** So as the Minister of Finance, this information wasn't in the budget documents and the analysis hasn't been shared.

Can you table the analysis on the breakdown exactly of the \$600 million to the House of Assembly, please?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the \$600 million for all of severance includes everybody within the public service, with the exception of Nalcor. It even includes Memorial University. That's for all public servants, bargaining and non-bargaining.

The amounts in last year's budget, the \$39 million, was for the one to eight years, including \$52 million in this year's budget for the one to eight years; the balance of the money is for the nine years and over, and that will be spread primarily over this year's budget and next year's

budget. We are keeping some for the people who wish to take it at a later date, and that will be spread out over several years, somewhere in the 10 per cent range.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Natural Resources Minister directed the media to budget day when asked about the future of Nalcor. The Premier later said that the budget would contain language regarding what would take place; however, the Budget Speech contains no details.

I ask the minister: How much will it cost to separate Nalcor into multiple Crown corporations?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question.

When I mentioned it on Monday, I said there would be language – the budget was coming out the next day; certainly happy to answer any questions the Opposition or anyone has about this idea, this process that we're going through now.

Mr. Speaker, the oil and gas company within Nalcor, it has its own board of directors. We are going to make that a stand-alone Crown corporation. That is our intent; that's what we're working towards. It will take a legislative change, Mr. Speaker. We think it's very valuable, considering the amount of work that we've done on *Advance 2030* and making sure that we're really driving exploration to ensure that we have a good, substantive growth in our oil and gas industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the minister again: What's the cost to separate Nalcor into multiple corporations? Surely, you must have done this estimate.

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

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

We don't anticipate any costs. At this point, it's merely taking the organization as it stands right now and taking it outside of the Nalcor corporation. It gives it better transparency; it reports really back to the Department of Natural Resources. It already is physically separated from the Nalcor entity, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to give a quote from Noia, the Newfoundland Ocean Industries Association, the executive director Charlene Johnson says: Having the oil and gas corporation as a stand-alone Crown corporation with its own board of directors, mandate policies and strategic focus that is solely focused on the oil and gas industry is welcomed by Noia.

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

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

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

I recognize Noia has their position, but we don't represent Noia and no one here represents Noia. We represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** And that's what our questions are all about.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was some confusion. The minister said about it being a new Crown corporation or report directly to the Department of Natural Resources.

Which is it? Is it a separate Crown corporation or is it going to report directly to the Department of Natural Resources?

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, this will be a Crown corporation. Currently, it is a subsidiary of Nalcor. As we move through the process of legislative change, it will become its own Crown corporation, not a subsidiary of Nalcor.

He's asking how the people of the province feel. Let me talk about the St. John's Board of Trade, the chair Andrea Stack. The St. John's Board of Trade supports the establishment of a stand-alone entity to drive the *Advance 2030* plan. Having an entity dedicated to maximizing our oil and gas reserves should help ensure we meet its full potential.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

In the past several years under Nalcor, this province has had record-breaking land sales, the seismic program is certainly world class and the oil industry is one of the economic leaders of the province, all under the oil and gas division of Nalcor. Now the minister has stated the vision needs a rebrand.

I ask the minister: What shortcomings now exist to require such a change?

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, apparently he didn't hear the quotes that I have just given to this hon. House of the people who support this move, making it instead of being a subsidiary of Nalcor – and Nalcor, as we all know, Mr. Speaker, is very focused on electricity and finishing up the Muskrat Falls Project.

Now, we have a new *Advance 2030*, which is an aggressive program to drive development of our offshore oil and gas industry. This is an opportunity to now have an oil and gas Crown

corporation that will be working steadily to ensure that we maximize the opportunity that we have in our offshore oil and gas industry.

I'll just also give another quote from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. They appreciate the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's continued support and encouragement of a robust oil and natural gas industry.

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

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

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

The question was very simple. She's changing the operation of the oil and gas division of Nalcor. Obviously there must be shortcomings with the current operations. She can't tell us what it is and why the change is occurring.

Mr. Speaker, in the past several years, as I said, the work that's been through the oil and gas sector at Nalcor has been well respected for what it's achieved. So the minister said she's changing, for some apparent reason, we don't know. Again, we don't know the costs of the changes.

Could she tell us what are the costs going to be? Why are you making the changes now? Not that other organizations want it. You're the government. You're making the change. Why are you making the change?

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

**MS. COADY:** At the risk of repeating myself, Mr. Speaker, we're not expecting any costs involved in this change at all. We all know in this room, and I'll inform the people of the province that the oil and gas division of Nalcor is not even in the Nalcor building. They have their own stand-alone facilities.

So that transition has already occurred. They are outside of the premises of Nalcor. They have their own board of directors. What we are doing here is really focusing on the exploration opportunities that we have in this province.

We've made an aggressive plan that says we're going to have over 100 exploration wells in the next decade, and we want to double our production offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that it's your government's intention to direct that revenue collected from the new carbon tax will go to rate mitigation of electricity rates?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change.

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

I thank the Member for the question. But before I get into the question, you're going to have to help me here, Mr. Speaker. The Member put a private Member's motion forth, and he put out a statement after which is absolutely, categorically false. I can't say certain words about it, but I'll just read it.

The Opposition critic for Environment said the Ball Liberals voted to reject a PC motion to relieve Newfoundland and Labrador of any obligation to pay a carbon tax, considering the significant investment in hydro in Muskrat Falls.

That is absolutely, categorically false. This is a federal program. The federals said here's what you have to do. So for the Member to put that out there in the public is irresponsible, it's false, it's not true, and if he wants to have a discussion on carbon tax, we should sit down with the facts

—

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

**MR. JOYCE:** — not with this type of information that's put out, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

I want to clarify to the minister, all we've ever asked over here is stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. PETTEN:** That's you who were elected, not federally. You're elected to represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on taxes.

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

**MR. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker, people were expecting to hear details on your new tax, the Liberal carbon tax in yesterday's budget. Instead, we're told the details would be made public this spring. Your carbon tax is coming, and you weren't open and transparent.

Why weren't the details of this new tax included in the budget?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change.

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I have to finish on with the statement that he made, the false information that was put out in the public.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** To make matters worse, they voted in favour of giving Ottawa the authority to oppose a carbon pricing. Mr. Speaker, Ottawa has the authority. So for the Member to make those statements in public about carbon tax when he has no idea what's he's talking about, it's irresponsible.

We said in the budget, the Premier said and I said that the carbon pricing plan will be put out this spring. And, Mr. Speaker, it will be put out this spring so everybody in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will see it, as we committed. It will be done this spring but it

won't be on these irresponsible, false statements that have been put out by the Opposition.

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

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

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

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

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

For the third year in a row government has cut Memorial University's operating grant just before a major study of public post-secondary institutions is slated to begin.

I ask the Premier: Why is his government arbitrarily slashing Memorial's budget without even waiting for evidence from the study indicating what the needs are?

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

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

Thank you for the question. Certainly, we as a government have made significant commitment to our post-secondary institutions within this province. We have and we continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we've had to do is work with under a very, very challenging fiscal situation. We have not only core government; we have worked with our ABCs, Memorial University, the College of the North Atlantic.

One of the things we have maintained, Mr. Speaker, is that we make sure we have an affordable, accessible education for Newfoundland and Labrador students. We will continue to do that, and we have made a commitment to that, 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.

At a time when government should be investing in public post-secondary institutions to revitalize our economy we see more cuts to these institutions, some commitment threatening their facilities and programs. I'm not sure how these cuts qualify as building for the future or showing commitments.

I ask the Premier: Will the study be just another way to continue cutting post-secondary education?

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

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

It's certainly a pleasure for the Members opposite to be on that side and talk about spending money. Obviously, I know the Third Party haven't had an opportunity to do that yet, but we know what's happened in the Official Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, if the Member would drive along by Prince Philip Drive you'll see a significant infrastructure investment within Memorial University – significant investment.

Mr. Speaker, we have made a strong commitment. We have just gone through the Premier's Task Force for kindergarten to grade 12. I think there are 82 recommendations that we are now implementing. We have put a significant amount of money into the budget to implement some of those recommendations.

The studies, Mr. Speaker, will be the same. We are going to be looking at our post-secondary institutions to make sure we have a future for our young people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

The Minister of Finance has said he applied a gender analysis to this year's budget.

I ask the minister: Will he please table the specific gender analysis tool he used, who did the analysis and the reports on the results of the analysis that was done in both preparing the budget and in reviewing it before it was brought forward?

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

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

The Women's Policy Office has been very engaged. I thank the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board for ensuring what I'm going to call a very engaged process with the Women's Policy Office to review all the decisions within the budget. I will table, for the Member opposite, the Integrated Approach to Policy/Program Development: Guidelines for Gender Inclusive Analysis. This is by the Women's Policy Office. It will describe the process.

Mr. Speaker, also we use an awful lot of the federal criteria that is used by the Status of Women Canada. As we evolve in ensuring this gender lens on the budget, I'm sure there will be improvements, but I'm happy to table this to ensure that the Member opposite is fully informed.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's not just about doing an analysis after the budget is done. It's in preparing the budget, and there are specific reports that result from that process.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to table the reports from both the preparation of the budget and also analysis after the budget.

I ask the minister: What did his gender analysis say about implementing pay equity, because it is not in the budget?

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

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

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

Ensuring we have a gender lens on everything we do in this government, I have to commend my colleagues sitting here around me because I know they have really sought to ensure that did take place, not only last year but again this year. This has been the second year and we are improving our processes all the time.

You've heard in the Speech from the Throne how dedicated this government is to ensuring gender equity. You've heard it now in the budget. There were a lot of announcements in yesterday's budget.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to disclose and to table the report, an integrated approach to how the gender inclusive analysis was done and we'll continue to do so.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Time for Question Period has ended, I'm sorry.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

#### **Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the *Public Tender Act*, I hereby table reports of the Public Tender Act Exceptions for November and December 2017 and January 2018 as presented by the Chief

Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Tabling of Documents.

#### **Tabling of Documents**

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in Question Period, I'm happy to table An Integrated Approach to Policy/ Program Development: Guidelines for Gender Inclusive Analysis from the Women's Policy Office.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

#### **Notices of Motion**

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997, Bill 10.

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

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

#### **Petitions**

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

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

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

WHEREAS opioid addiction is a very serious problem affecting many individuals and families

in our province, and the Bell Island area is no exception; and

WHEREAS the effects of this problem have implications that negatively impact many people, old and young; and

WHEREAS support and treatment programs have been proven to break the cycle of addiction and have helped many into recovery;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to establish a Suboxone-methadone treatment plan for Bell Island, which would include a drug addictions counsellor at the hospital and a drug awareness program in the local schools.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've had a change to present this earlier this week and I want to continue doing this because I want to bring to light the importance and the seriousness of the opioid crisis that we have here.

I know it's not lost on deaf ears in this House because we had a very intensive debate over the last two sittings about the opioid crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador and the effect that it has – and it has nothing to do with age, it has nothing to do with geographic makeups, it has nothing to do with islands versus isolated versus urban versus rural communities. It has to do with our ability to provide services and supports to ensure that we address this issue and give people an opportunity to get control of their lives again, give them an opportunity to be productive citizens in their communities and give them an opportunity for their families to come together again in a supportive mechanism as a community and as a unit to address the needs here.

We all know the impact it has on our economy. When people are not productive because there are health issues, particularly in this case because there's an addiction issue, that has an impact on all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

So what's being proposed here is that – unfortunately, on Bell Island there seems to be more than the average addictions issues around opioids. We're obviously all trying to look at what are the causes of that, particularly to alleviate it increasing, but also what we're trying to do is find solutions to those who already have opioid addictions issue.

There are two particular groups over there. I give credit to the community for taking the lead on this. Unity in Community is one organization that has started to bring together a number of professionals who talk about how we address this and bring those who are fighting addictions, those who are presently recovering from it and those who have recovered and are now, as the mentors, to try and move things forward.

There is also another community group called Heal Bell Island, which is about trying to bring the community and the supports there and find new mechanisms to include people of all different areas and backgrounds when it comes to the opioid issues to address that. I've had some conversations with the minister. The minister is very aware of it and very supportive of trying to find a mechanism and is open to having some discussions about how we address that.

So I want it on record that the community has come together. I'm going to keep fighting for it and hopefully we'll find a solution with the support of the government and the Minister of Health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services for a response, please.

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

Indeed, the Member opposite and I had a corridor consult, in medical terms, before we came to the House and he has, as he's said, brought this to the House before. I think I would commend the community and both groups for their initiative in what is a very successful approach in other areas.

There is support for Bell Island. The department funds SWAP and that is a source, for example, of the needle exchange. I would offer him the fact that we are working on service redesign through the *Towards Recovery* implementation plan, and the location of those services is obviously a key discussion going forward.

My challenge in terms of ultimate access is around prescribers for opioid-dependence treatment. I have 21 in the province, compared with 1,300 physicians who prescribe opiates on a regular basis. So I would offer that. We have actually opened up some new telephone codes for Telehealth consultations for addiction services as well.

It's on our radar too, and I'd be happy to engage with the Member opposite and, indeed, any of the Members of this House who feel they have specific community needs.

Thank you.

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

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, I will now call on the Member for Windsor Lake to introduce the resolution standing in her name.

The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

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

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

I want to take a moment to thank those women and men who are home today viewing the debate this afternoon. I've received numerous messages indicating that – even most recently from a young mother who is home watching the debate this afternoon with her three children. I also want to thank the organizations that have shown up here in the House of Assembly and the individuals who have shown up here today for this important private Member's resolution.

I also want to say a sincere thank you to the hundreds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the last 18 hours who have sent email

messages from all over the province, from Happy Valley-Goose Bay, St. Anthony, Port aux Basques, Placentia, Central Newfoundland and the East Coast, indicating their stories and their support.

Mr. Speaker, we're here today to have a conversation about the importance of –

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

Could I ask the Member, please, to issue a motion?

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Yes.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**MS. C. BENNETT:** I'm going to make the motion that:

WHEREAS sexual harassment is a common occurrence in the workplace throughout Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS women of the province and all people deserve to work in a safe environment, free from harassment and sexual harassment; and

WHEREAS there are several pieces of legislation that govern safety in the workplace in Newfoundland and Labrador, including the *Labour Relations Act*, *Labour Standards Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador legislation currently does not reflect societal expectations of harassment-free workplaces;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the newly strengthened and modernized workplace harassment policy introduced by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and urges government to show even more leadership by making legislative changes to these and other pieces of legislation to ensure women and others are protected in all workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador from harassment and sexual harassment.

Seconding that motion, Mr. Speaker, is the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, she sat hidden under her desk unable to move, forcing herself not to move. If he saw her there, he would come in and it would begin again. Later, he showed up at her home. She hid behind the dark window, with the lights off, so he'd go away.

She looked in a mirror of the staff washroom, stealing herself for another night of groping at the local pub. The tips were good, so she needed to stay. If she had a choice, she'd leave.

He had only recently confided in friends that he was gay. He never expected that his personal information would be shared with the warehouse guys, so he was shocked when one of the guys grabbed his ass and asked if he liked it.

She worked hard to achieve her apprenticeship ticket. Long hours, juggling being a single mom, classes, on-the-job training. And one day on the floor, she was cornered by a man that she had the opportunity to garner favour with, the shop steward, right now, as he proceeded to try and fondle her breast.

She had refused to co-operate with his plan, so he made sure he gossiped about her, spread rumours about her, and tried to ruin her reputation and her career. She silently persevered, surviving the emotional abuse from the bully.

Mr. Speaker, these five quick stories are examples that I've heard and I'm sure Members of this House have heard in relation to sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Webster's Dictionary defines harassment as uninvited and unwelcomed verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature, especially by a person in authority toward a subordinate. And it defines harassment as to create an unpleasant or hostile situation for another person, especially by uninvited and unwelcomed verbal or physical conduct.

Mr. Speaker, sexual harassed individuals, be they women or others, have to deal with the guilt

around the situation for a number of reasons and, in spite feeling bullied, they may still feel that they are the ones who initiated those insults through the language they use or the way they dress. And the worst part is their fear of telling the problem to their partners, family or friends, in judgment and the possibility of losing their jobs.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that workplace culture, unchecked, has a huge impact on whether harassment, whether bullying and, most importantly, whether sexual harassment is allowed to happen. If leadership doesn't set the tone and allows harassment to happen, there is a cascade effect throughout the organization.

Mr. Speaker, tension, anger, fear, frustrations build up and lead to physical, mental and emotional problems. An Angus Reid report on February 9, 2018 on sexual harassment in the workplace talked about 52 per cent of Canadian women say they've been subject to sexual harassment alone in the workplace, and 28 per cent of Canadian women say they've been subject to non-consensual sexual touching in the workplace.

Young women tend to be among the strongest voices for change, while men in the same age group are more permissive in their views about what is and isn't acceptable in the workplace. Older men, who see many of those being accused in their peer group, tend to say social norms are changing too quickly, making it hard to know where to draw the line on behaviour. That said, they're also more likely to express views in line with women on a number of matrixes surrounding sexual harassment.

A CRA poll of adults in Newfoundland and Labrador reports that one in 10 women in the province have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime. I'd find it ironic if I didn't point out that of the 10 female Members of this House, statistically, one of these Members has been subject to sexual harassment, if that poll information is correct.

Twenty-three per cent of adult Newfoundland and Labrador people reported to being sexually harassed and that harassment has been experienced within the last five years. One in

seven having most recently experienced such an incident five years ago or more.

There's a reason why we need to change the laws, and it's quite simple. Harassment, sexual harassment, bullying in the workplace creates a pervasively hostile work environment that can impact employees. Harassment, sexual or otherwise, is an abuse of power and when someone in power has the ability to influence your career opportunities and bullies or threatens another person, that can lead to mental health issues, physical health issues, emotional challenges and career impacts.

If we look at the specific impacts like mental health, psychologists note that sexual harassment and harassment can lead to many common disorders: depression, anxiety and even post-traumatic stress disorder. It can trigger systems of depression and anxiety that are new to a person, and it can exacerbate a previous condition that may have been controlled or resolved.

Some research has found that sexual harassment early in one's career, in particular, can lead to long-term depressive symptoms and can even lead to suicide. Groups of employees have been known to turn on the victims and making the conditions further unbearable.

Victims of harassment, sexual harassment in particular, often report weight loss, or weight gain, loss of appetite, headaches, nausea and when the physical effects of sexual harassment manifest in a workplace, there is a cause for serious loss of productivity.

Emotional health: The harassment's effect on an individual can range from simple irritation to extreme depression. Those who are subject to these types of behaviours often have the tendency to lose their self-esteem and morale, and as a result they are frequently disruptive and not able to concentrate fully on their tasks.

Inconsistent time keeping, absenteeism, lack of commitment, low performance, all of these things can lead to the potential of a woman, or another person who is experiencing harassment, sexual harassment, to resign; all of that impacting the organizations performance and effectiveness.

And let's not forget the career impacts, including the financial repercussions and the employment decisions. This can include potentially being fired or not hired, being passed over for promotions, receiving lower wages and being assigned to the worst shifts or duties than your other co-workers.

If there have been no adverse employment decisions, then the pattern of sexual harassment may be so frequent and severe that it creates a hostile work environment, creating the desire or need to transfer or quit a position as a result of the harassment, sometimes lowering individuals earning potential and being ostracized in your workplace as a result of the harassment, because we know that situations like bystander effects are known to happen in workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, several provinces in Canada, Alberta and Ontario just as two examples, have added to their legislative framework for occupational health and safety policies, procedures, standards, expectations that make our workplaces safer not only for women, but for everyone who works in the workplaces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. As a matter of fact, occupational health and safety laws around the world have identified workplace harassment as being a core physio-social hazard.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that we have a number of laws both provincially and federally that can and do provide a level of safety or rebuke for women and others who experience harassment, whether it's the Human Rights Code, whether it's the *Criminal Code* of Canada, but I think we can do better in our province. I think when we hear about the global movement of MeToo and TIME'S UP, we can address the laws of Newfoundland and Labrador to become more progressive so that harassment, sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace becomes a thing of the past.

We have women in our province who, for decades and decades and decades, survived in workplaces because the expectations societally was different than it is today. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this House, I believe this government, I believe this province wants the laws of our land to reflect the societal norms that are now known and well known, not just in our

province but in our country and around the world.

There needs to be accountability for the safety of women and others in the workplace, with clear outcomes for those who fail to provide that safe place. We need policies that must work in the workplace, such as tools and things to address and overcome the bystander effect, which is the social-psychological phenomena in which individuals are less likely to offer help to victims.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier and my caucus colleagues for supporting me in bringing forward this private Member's resolution today and I look forward to the debate this afternoon. I look forward to a very positive outcome on a cold and dreary Wednesday afternoon.

Thank you.

**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.

I'd like to thank the Member, my hon. colleague from the District of Windsor Lake, for bringing this very important motion before the House here today. It's certainly a pleasure to participate in this debate on addressing and preventing harassment in the workplace.

Harassment, bullying, intimidation, unwanted advances, stalking, inappropriate talk and behaviour, posters, pictures, paraphernalia, all of these describe situations in which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have had to work and endure abuse over the years. Some of those settings have been within the government itself, but the problem also exists in the private sector and elsewhere: offices, boardrooms, work sites, classrooms, hospitals and locker rooms, sometimes in private, sometimes in the full view of others.

In recent decades, people have become more aware of what constitutes harassment and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace, but, unfortunately, awareness alone has not done enough to stop it. Some seem oblivious, some

seem like they just don't care, some may be in denial or even unaware that they are crossing a line.

The MeToo movement has gripped the public consciousness in recent months and it's an opportunity to say time's up, forget the excuses, let's end this once and for all. There are many things we can do, Mr. Speaker, to end harassment: education, role modelling and effective parenting are among them, but to truly put an end to harassment we need legislation with teeth that will impose a penalty for this kind of behaviour and violence.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's not enough just to have that legislation for government departments. I think that's grossly insufficient in today's day and age. We need to protect all citizens, male, female, youth, seniors. Everyone deserves protection. To this end, I think all of our acts need to be amended to protect people who are working in the private and not-for-profit sectors as well.

It was a very moving speech by my colleague from Windsor Lake. I think everyone could feel the goosebumps as she started revealing some of the stories that she shared with us. Unwanted advances are violent. They are not fun, they are not amusing. They are abusive.

It's not an excuse to say women are new to the workforce. Women took to the workforce en masse during the Second World War, if not before, and that was a very long time ago. In the province's fish plants decades ago women dominated the field and set the pace. In banks and classrooms, clinics and restaurants, hotels and stores, women were busy working decades ago doing their part to buoy up our economy and make their own families ends meet. That See Change was happening before many of us were even born but other See Changes didn't happen so quickly. Parity of pay is one, for example, that has been a long time coming and we're still not there yet.

Equal roles at the senior levels of the workplace have been a long time coming. In so many workplaces basic respect, dignity and safety have been a long time coming, or haven't occurred at all. We've all seen the old stereotype portrayed where women walking past a

construction site are whistled at or catcalled. These days, women are working on those construction sites and in many other professions dominated by men.

There are many women in uniform, all sorts of uniforms: military, police, firefighters and so on. Sadly, we've heard stories of women in uniform, just as in other workplaces, being subjected to behaviour that is unacceptable and sometimes even criminal. We need to deal appropriately with those instances when they occur and preventatively before they occur.

We also need to recognize that just because a behaviour doesn't violate the Criminal Code, means that the behaviour is acceptable or tolerable. People should not be breathing a sigh of relief when they find out they don't face criminal charges. They need to be held to account when they harass others. We can no longer let it slide because if we do then we all slide as a society and the next generations slide right along with us.

The level of hatred and vitriol in the public sphere in recent months has been appalling. Things are being spoken and written on social media that are beyond disgraceful. I've many times looked at Facebook and thought, what's happening to our world? If we let this go on without trying to halt it, this is all going to end very badly. This is our moment as a society to turn the page. We can do that by instituting laws that change the nature of all workplaces to impose parameters that people cannot cross without consequences.

That may sound scary to some, Mr. Speaker. They fear that their rights and freedoms will be whittled away, but think of how scary it is to be that vulnerable person subjected to harassment in the workplace. Think about being that person who has to hide under the desk. Think about that person who dreads coming to work in the morning because they don't know what kind of insults are going to be hurled at them during the day.

Some people can let everything roll off them, like water off a duck's back, and they may have learned not to let bad behaviour bother them. Some people and others will argue: Gee, everyone ought to grow a thicker skin, just put

up with it – but I disagree. The solution is not to train everyone to suck it up; the solution is to stop the hurtful behaviour in its tracks.

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

**MS. PERRY:** Let's raise the standards of what is acceptable in the public sphere. And why should we do that? One reason is that some individuals are not in a position to sidestep the violence that comes their way. Some are levelled by it, flattened, destroyed, annihilated. Some are driven to suicide. That makes the harassing behaviour tantamount to murder.

Not all of those subjected to violence are women. Some are men, some are children and teens. Some are persons with disabilities of one sort or another. Some are indigenous. Some are new Canadians or from ethnic minorities. Some are LGBTQ. Some are picked on because of their physical appearance or because of their age, but many, many, many of those harassed in the workplace are women, and women are leading the charge to change things.

It's been a long, long wait. We were told that things would change long before now, but enough waiting, enough putting up with bad behaviour and waiting for people to grow tired of behaving that way. Because some people will never learn on their own, and new generations will come along repeating whatever bad behaviour they think they can get away with. Some people even celebrate that kind of behaviour and call it locker-room talk, but it's time for society to grow up.

Statistics for harassment in the workplace are hard to pin down, but surveys show the number of people who have experienced harassment in the workplace are very, very high and, as my colleague stated, one in 10 women is the statistic for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're at a point now where hard and fast statistics should not be what requires us to be motivated to act. We should know enough, we should be angry enough about what women and vulnerable persons have been subjected to that we're ready to act, and now is the time to do it.

The problem is still going on, it's still taking victims and it's still prevalent enough that all of



us in this room, probably, can put many faces to real-life stories. We could fill today's sitting just with the stories that have been circulating in our own communities in recent months. It's time to find solutions that will work.

The solutions we are talking about are founded on procedural fairness. There's a definition of procedural fairness in the province's Harassment and Discrimination-Free Workplace Policy. It "includes the right to be heard, the right to be treated without bias, the right to be informed of the allegations being made and to be provided with an opportunity to respond to them ...." The law may have served people poorly at times in the past, but the route of due process is infinitely preferable to a route that lacks procedural fairness.

So the way to make due process work better is to change the rules and practices at all workplaces so that bad behaviour has fewer shadows in which it can hide. Once we accept that harassment is indeed intolerable, we cannot allow those dark, shadowy places to linger in our workplaces. People in all workplaces need to be educated and motivated to stand by one another in defiance of harassing behaviour and attitudes.

One method is to put a human face on the word: harassment. People can be led to empathize with those who are affected by harassment. Because what if it were someone you loved? What if it was your daughter, your wife, your mother? What if it was you but you were unable to fight back?

People can be taught how to shift their perspectives and walk in the shoes of another person. They can learn to check their behaviour and set higher standards for themselves. People can grow and leave their bad behaviour behind. And they don't lose anything in the process – they gain. And all of us gain. In this way, the laws we create would not just be punitive, they would also be rehabilitative.

Mr. Speaker, the province's Harassment and Discrimination-Free Workplace Policy is outlined on the website. It lists the obligations of employers and managers with respect to workplace behaviour. I'm very pleased that we're going to be bringing in some legislation that's going to strengthen policy because policy

is not always as enforceable as legislation, and give it some teeth so that victims have a better opportunity to find real solutions.

I will repeat the words of my hon. colleague from Windsor Lake: We need to do more. We need to extend this legislation, beyond just government department, to all workplaces. I, myself, have worked in the private sector. I've worked in the public sector, the not-for-profit sector and in the House of Assembly. In each of these occupations, I can relate experiences of things that happen in the workplace that were unsettling.

I think I can honestly say, in all of those professions, I was not one bit prepared for the House of Assembly which, in and of itself, is one of the most unique workplaces I have ever been in. Here in the House of Assembly we should lead by example and we have a ways to go here as well.

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

**MS. PERRY:** Mr. Speaker, some of the definitions that are outlined in this policy statement include: "Abuse of Authority – a form of harassment which occurs when a person, usually a supervisor or a manager, uses his/her authority in a manner which serves no legitimate work purpose." It misuses their power for the purpose of intimidating or demeaning an individual.

Bullying is "a form of harassment which often consists of actions or verbal comments that are intended to intimidate, offend, or humiliate a particular person or group of people."

Discrimination is "the refusal to employ or continue to employ, or to intentionally or unintentionally deny a right, benefit or opportunity on the basis of an actual or perceived prohibited ground of discrimination ...."

"Harassment – comments or conduct which are abusive, offensive, demeaning or vexatious that are known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Harassment may be intended or unintended."

Sexual harassment is the “unwanted and unwelcomed behaviour of a sexual nature.”

Mr. Speaker, I’m going to run out of time and I have so much left that I want to talk about, but I will end on this note, I think it’s important we address all aspects: bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. It starts in the early stages as bullying and harassment and, if unchecked, that individual or perpetrator can grow into more violence and eventually become a sexual harasser.

I think it’s crucial that we all support this motion here in this hon. House today. I think that it’s crucial that we extend the legislation to all workforces and all workplaces in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and I know that myself and all my colleagues will be happy to stand in support of your motion here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

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

Of course, thank you to both hon. colleagues from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and to the Member for Windsor Lake for bringing this motion forward. I think it’s safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that this is an uncomfortable conversation to have, but it’s time that we start having these conversations and it’s time that there’s change brought about. I’m happy to second this motion today.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize and thank – we have a public gallery full of strong, supportive women who have come here today to be a part of this conversation and to witness this conversation –

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

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Of course, it means a lot that those women are here today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share a personal story of my own. As we look around, my hon. colleague referenced the number of women that we have

here in our Legislature, and I’m going to share a story of mine when I first decided to run for public office. I notice up in the gallery that we also have women who have ran for public office.

Number one, for women to put themselves forward, it’s not as common – it’s becoming more common now thankfully; we need to see more of this. But to get past that, to actually make that decision, for some women that’s a really big decision, first and foremost, I will say that. That’s a hurdle right there in itself.

It’s been a lifelong dream of mine to run for office and I’m so happy I’ve decided to do so. I remember it started off with a nomination process. We’ve all been through it here, of course. I’m making reference to a male supporter, a man who was much older than me, who will remain nameless. I won’t identify, obviously, but it started off a supporter of mine. At that time when you’re running, no matter if you’re a woman or if you’re a man, of course you want all the good, genuine support that you can get while running for politics.

That was fine, that this supporter was supportive verbally in the community. However, I will mention that this man, this gentleman does not live in my district. It’s not a constituent of mine. As time went on, and it was a long process through that nomination process for the district of – it was Port de Grave and then Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, and I had successfully secured the nomination.

I noticed the change in behaviour, from this particular supporter at the time, became very possessive and even mean. The language started to change. I had a voicemail, of course, on my personal phone and that voicemail would be filled up on the hour of unwelcomed messages – sometimes positive, sometimes were threatening – and it became very stressful.

You can imagine a young woman running for politics for the very first time. When you’re running for politics, as you know, you want to portray the best image of yourself. You want your credentials and your experiences – you’re out there and you know any kind of information can be quite damaging, and it’s fearful to any candidate to be threatened.

At this time it was scary, I will say. I had to bring in my campaign team on this and say this is what's happening to me. The voicemails – I ended up having to remove my voicemail from my phone, Mr. Speaker. I contacted my cellphone provider. This person's number was blocked from my phone, but there was no way to stop this person from accessing the voicemail. It would fill up literally on the hour. No one else could leave a voicemail on my phone. It was very distracting.

You're out there in a political campaign. You want to knock on every door you can. You want to reach every constituent that you can. People have questions, you want to be accessible for the public. Your time is dedicated to this work. Of course, with the voicemail that was a challenge. So, like I say, I ended up having to remove the voicemail. To this very day, my personal phone does not have a voicemail for that purpose.

That was very frustrating and stressful, but I had to bring my team in. My campaign manager contacted this individual and said it's best that you stay away. Stay away from the office, or you can't do this to Pam. You have to respect her wishes.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, I've done nothing wrong. There was nothing I have done to invite this behaviour. There was never any action on my part that would cause this behaviour, but this person would take responsibility for the success that I was experiencing and saying: Oh, she got elected, she got that because of me. I went around, I called into the *Open Line* shows and I spoke highly. Now she won't have anything to do with me.

Well, I ask every one of you, picture how that must feel. So I did my best to ignore it. My parents and my family were also involved in my campaign. You can imagine my mother, how she was concerned.

The voicemails then changed to not just threatening to go on an *Open Line* show to damage me or to say something about me, and I'm sure some of my other colleagues can actually relate to this, but they then changed to: I know who's coming to your house. I can see who you're associating with.

It came to a point, you don't want this to get out. That's a big fear, like I say, when you're running for political office, but it came to the point eventually when I finally became – this had been going on for a course of two to three years during the election.

This man, despite being asked to stay away, came to the campaign headquarters when he felt like it, walked on in. Not just assaulted or offended me, but members of my team, volunteers. As we all know, at this point in time it's a workplace, but it's a volunteer. It starts off as a volunteer basis, and the people who come to help you are volunteers.

One lady in particular on my campaign team also received some bad behaviour from this individual. This individual had gone around the community saying slanderous things and horrible things, embarrassing things that were fiction.

So, eventually, I had to involve the RCMP on this, Mr. Speaker. The police had told me this person knows how to do enough, but not enough to be arrested or to commit what is considered a crime. They said, why don't you go and file a peace bond.

Myself, as a former journalist, and I had been assigned to cover many court cases over my career as a journalist. If you were to go and apply for such a court document, a peace bond of any type, your name gets on a public docket. It's public. I believe it's available online and it's certainly available in the dockets in the courts.

Let me ask you, Mr. Speaker, what candidate wants to see their name on a public docket while running for office, even though, in this case, a victim? It's not something you want to get out there and something that could be used against you. So it's kind of a rock in a hard place. I often wondered, and it's been asked of me, do you think this man would be doing this to you if you were a male? I didn't have the answers but it's quite stressful, and it happens too often.

So at this point in time, again, members of my campaign team had to step in and actually meet with the individual and say you've got to stop. Also, my father has a business in the district in Bay Roberts. This individual would also stop by

my father's place of business, his office, to give his opinion and to make comments. Until one day, finally, my father said you have to leave and don't come back. I also will say that this individual visited my parent's residence and left a note in the door.

We hear these stories – and I'm sure every one of us can relate in here. Again, I want to highlight and acknowledge the statistics are higher for women and what we experience but it's important to note that men, our male colleagues also experience incidents of harassment, sexual assault.

I'm glad to see that this legislation will be brought forward. I'm very happy our Premier is supporting this, of course. Of course, the Member – again, it's a very uncomfortable topic to bring up and to discuss, but you know what? Thank God it's happening now, Mr. Speaker. It's not just happening here in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's happening across the world.

Look no further, of course, as I mentioned before the Oscars. We see leaders, women in strong leadership roles in Hollywood starting the MeToo campaign, and it's happening everywhere. It's time for change.

I'll also make some reference as I did before to a popular song, a favourite song of mine, "Goodbye Earl" by the Dixie Chicks. A very popular tune, a fun song to sing, a great melody, but "Goodbye Earl" Earl had to die. It talks about how a young girl out of high school gets married, shortly after marriage she starts experiencing physical abuse and her friend flies in – well, the rest of the song is history, but those lyrics come from somewhere. They're real stories.

As a journalist, of course, I've covered many stories and witnessed many situations of assault and abuse and whatnot. I've had many stories – I'll share a story now of a friend who came to me working in a workplace and things were going well. The boss came to her one time and invited her out on a date or suggested they get closer. She didn't – I guess wasn't interested, and shortly after she was placed on probation. I guess she inquired about it, and the reason being: you're not a team player; you're not very

enthusiastic; we're not seeing you be a team player.

So these are the sorts of things that can happen. They can fly under the radar. They're hard to identify, as our other hon. colleague mentioned, but it's time. I'm happy to see legislation is being modified to reflect and to identify these things and to nip them in the bud as they are happening. The onus is on each and every one of us here as bystanders, as colleagues. If we see it, let's call it out. Let's not be afraid. This legislation will protect those who come forward.

Just think about it, would you want your son or daughter to experience any of this? I tell you it was very stressful for me, what I experienced on my campaign, but it broke my heart to know what it was also doing to my mother. She took that to heart, Mr. Speaker. She saw her daughter going through what I was going through. And I will say it's currently, unfortunately, to a degree ongoing. I guess I will have to decide going forward on how I want to handle this. As a last resort, you want to bring in the law. You don't want to see anybody go to jail undeservingly, or even so it's not a process you want to be involved in but we have to protect ourselves and we have to protect each other.

Thank you for listening to my – this is the first time I've actually told the story publicly. As I said, it's uncomfortable, but I appreciate your attention here today. Again, thank you to the people who've come to take part in this and to witness this. Let's do what we can. Let's stick together. Let's do the best we can because we owe that to each other and the people around us.

I look forward to hearing the debate. I look forward to the support of the House unanimously on this, and, again, it's about time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

When is the last time we were in the House of Assembly when a Member of government side of the House got a standing ovation, followed by a Member in the Opposition getting a standing ovation, followed by a Member on the government side of the House getting a standing ovation? I don't remember it ever happening, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you, can we go for four?

Mr. Speaker, in all honesty, after I'm finished my comments today I don't deserve a standing ovation because I'm not a woman and I can't put myself in the place of a woman and I certainly can't experience what the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave just described to this House, and did so publicly. I congratulate you for standing in your place today and having the courage to discuss this openly and publicly here. It's a big step for you, I'm sure, and it's a big step for all of us to hear it, but good for you.

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

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge the comments by the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. Over the last couple of days we've had several discussions about this private Member's resolution and we immediately knew that we were very supportive of what was being brought forward by the Member for Windsor Lake.

Our discussions were about getting it right. It really was. It was about us getting here today and using the small amount of time – because 15 minutes in the House of Assembly for us to speak is not a lot of time, but we talked about using that time as wisely as we can to make our messages and our deliveries as important and as meaningful as possible because this is a very important private Member's resolution, PMR. This is a very important private Member's resolution.

I thank her for her comments today because I thought she did a great job, like she always does. Towards the end, if you noticed, she just laid down her notes and laid down her paper. She said I'm running out of time and there's something I want to say. She talked about the conduct right here in this very House. She did so – I could tell she was a little hesitant to do so and I wasn't expecting her to do that. She did

that, but I acknowledge her and I congratulate her as well because here in the House we should be an example for all the public service.

We get hot sometimes about policy and we get going on each other about policy and so on, but we have to be careful not to be personal and not to be harassing. If you look at the definitions of harassing it's a very broad range of actions, activities, words, gestures, innuendo, a whole host of ways that harassment can take place in the workplace.

The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune is right, this is our workplace. And especially for women, we should be respectful. I'll explain why in a moment, because before I do I want to thank the Member for Windsor Lake for bringing this forward as well. Because it is everything I just said. It's a very important resolution.

As House of Assembly encouraging government to improve on legislation on this very important matter, it should absolutely be a priority. I know it's supported by the Premier and the government. We're glad they do and we're glad they continue to strive.

Mr. Speaker, I looked at a survey done by the federal government they released last fall. They did some public consultations, a survey. I had a quick look at it. It was a Government of Canada report November 2017. In it they said of those that did the online survey, a full 60 per cent of respondents reported experiencing having harassment in the workplace – a full 60 per cent.

Thirty per cent of the respondents had experienced sexual harassment; 21 per cent had experienced violence, and 3 per cent said the harassment was actually sexual violence. That's pretty serious. Mr. Speaker, 94 per cent – this goes back to my point just a moment ago that I said I'm going to get to – 94 per cent of those reporting sexual harassment were women, 94 per cent. So it is different for men than it is for women.

I know from my own background and my own years in my previous career, and it's no surprise to anyone, that harassment is about power. When people are harassed it is about power. Just by that very statistic, 94 per cent of those that

have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, 94 per cent of them being women. Quite often, and far too often, it's power by men over women.

It's also power over other divergent members of our population, if you include people such as LGBT community. Members before me talked about, and the Member for Windsor Lake talked about how sometimes when a person raises the fact that harassment has taken place in the workplace, they quite often become a target or are marginalized by their own peers, their own people within their working community.

It's not just isolated to LGBTQ. It's people of colour, minorities, indigenous communities, people who are differently abled, differently physically abled. It's a broad range of people who have those smaller groups quite often that are the victims of harassment in some form in the workplace.

So, Mr. Speaker, I stand here today very honestly and very open. I can't be more honest to say that as a man I don't understand fully. I can't say that I can stand in a place of a woman and understand what a woman goes through, because I can't. Or anybody else of a member of a divergent population or identified by – that are victims of harassment because of who they are. I can't do that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say this, is that all of us have a responsibility. All of us in the community have a responsibility. It doesn't matter if you're in government or Opposition, if you're an employer or a supervisor, or if you're an employee – and it doesn't have to be within government. It can be in private business. I've been working for over 40 years, much of it in private, working for private companies and private business. Much of my working career has been in public service, and the last eight years or so as a Member of the House of Assembly representing people here in the House.

Everywhere, no matter where it is, it doesn't have to be in your house or within government, everywhere and every workplace in our province, people have to take a stand and have a responsibility. Employers have a responsibility to make sure employees understand what harassment is. They have a responsibility to

supervise and have a look over what's happening in their workplaces to make sure that those types of activities do not take place. Employees have a responsibility to raise the bar or put their hand up and say: Excuse me, that's not good enough. Or to go to a supervisor or a third party independent person to say: I have a problem, or I saw a problem in my workplace and something needs to be done about it. So we all have a responsibility.

We also need to ensure that as a Legislature and as government we can take that lead as the PMR refers to, to say to workplaces and employers in the province and all workplaces that it's not good enough to say you're going to do it, but to change the legislation that impact workplaces to ensure it does happen. That's what needs to happen, Mr. Speaker. That's why, as my colleague said, we will be supporting this, because we believe government does have a role to play and we, as legislators, have a role to play as well in making sure the bar is set high and that what has happened in the past stops in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I remember several years ago as a public servant when there was an harassment issue that happened in the workplace, the policy said: Well, the first thing that has to happen is the person who harassed you has to understand that what they did was harassment. It immediately put the responsibility back on the person harassed in the workplace.

I've read through the new harassment-free workplace policy and there is a shift in that, and there should be. Because the responsibility should not just simply be with the person harassed, it should be with the person who is doing the harassing and everyone. It's a community problem. If that community be your office or your workplace or your neighbourhood or whatever the case may be, it's a community problem.

We just can't expect one person to say: Okay, this has been a terrible experience for you, but we're going to lay it all on your shoulders to fix it. That's not good enough. I see the shift that's happening here, and that has to take place, Mr. Speaker. People and the greater community have to become more responsible.

We've said for years to our children: You have to tell. We encourage people to tell. Don't keep bad secrets. We've told children and young people: Don't keep bad secrets, tell. I mentioned earlier, sometimes telling can bring more heat to the person who's told. That's unacceptable. That's simply unacceptable. Because when you think of all the global social media campaigns that are happening today – the Member for Windsor Lake talked about them earlier, about MeToo and TIME'S UP, as an example. There's no excuse today for not knowing what inappropriate conduct is in a workplace.

Now, there may be a very, very narrow grey area but people have to understand, if that's the grey area you shouldn't do it. You shouldn't conduct yourself in a way that could potentially be inappropriate. You have to stop doing it. You have to resist from doing that. It's not acceptable to do that.

As I said earlier, sometimes we can tap a colleague on the shoulder and say: you shouldn't say that, or you shouldn't do that. That's not right. Just to let you know now before this gets too big for you, don't go down that road. That's not right. That's not hard for us to do, especially when harassment continues and it's repetitive, because many harassments are repetitive. We just heard a very difficult story to listen to about repetitive harassment.

The Member for Windsor Lake referred earlier to PTSD, and it's true. A single incident can cause PTSD. A series of incidents, as we've talked about in this House before, can cause PTSD. Another aspect of this whole scenario that can be a contributor to PTSD or other psychological disorders or other psychological stressors on people is how an employer responds to the very person can be a cause for PTSD.

When a person has had an experience which is causing them significant difficulty in their lives and they go to their employer for support and they don't get it that could be a trigger. That could be that piece that pushes them over the edge and puts them over the top of being able to handle any more because sometimes – I did a video one time on PTSD. I laid a cup in my sink at home and I draped it with a black T-shirt so no one could see what was in it and I had water dripping in it.

The point of it was, the cup was about half full and the water was dripping in it. The point of the video was that eventually the cup is going to overflow, and can anyone say what drop of water caused it to overflow? That was the point of it, because that's what happens when you have repeated exposures that are causing you or lead you to PTSD. Can you actually say what event or what drop of water actually caused that cup to overflow? You can't, and sometimes how an employer responds to an employee in need can be that drop of water that causes that cup to overflow. It's an important point raised by the Member for Windsor Lake on PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wearing a moose hide today, and you're quite familiar with it because you did a campaign yourself just a few weeks ago on moose hide. I wear it today and I have the card with me from the Moose Hide Campaign and I was reading on their Facebook and on their website that they had a million moose hides given out this year. They've reached a million moose hides delivered throughout Canada this year.

The card that comes with it says, "The Moose Hide campaign is a grassroots movement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men who are standing up against violence towards ... women and children. Wearing this moose hide signifies your commitment to honor, respect, and protect the women and children in your life and to work together with other men to end violence against ... women and children. Our vision is to spread the Moose Hide campaign to ... organizations and communities" – and governments – "throughout Canada." I thought it very fitting for me to wear the moose hide today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I only have about a minute left.

Over the last couple of days, I've had the conversation about workplace violence and harassment against women many, many times, but the last couple of days I reached out to some women that I know to say this PMR is coming up, are you familiar with it? Here's what it is. I'm interested in your thoughts on it.

One of the women I spoke to raised my awareness to a song that goes back to the 1960s. Actually, it was the International Women's Day slogan in 2008. The song is called "Bread and

Roses.” The line in the song, which I fully agree with, says this: the rising of the women is the rising of us all. And I think that’s an important point today.

I thank the Member for bringing forward the PMR today, and we look forward to supporting it when it comes time to vote.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I wish I could stand as tall as my hon. colleague. I’m going to have to lean a little bit today. I wanted to acknowledge that I have a bit of a back issue. So forgive me for leaning, but I’ll do that.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an honour and a privilege, and I’m saying it’s an emotional day. It’s a somewhat difficult day to hear some of the stories we’re hearing today, but it certainly is an enlightening day. I think I want to recognize all my colleagues in this room for sharing their stories and giving their support to this. We are setting – we must set, as Members of the House of Assembly, as leaders in our communities, a higher standard, and I think today we are rising to that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize those in the galleries today that are lending their support, because I think it’s going to take our collective strength, the House of Assembly with its leadership, our community with its leadership, to say: No more, enough is enough. Violence, harassment, bullying and abuse is not to be tolerated. It’s up to every single one of us to ensure that is the case.

Mr. Speaker, for those who might be just joining us at home, we’re debating a motion today brought forward by the Member for Windsor Lake. It really does speak to supporting newly strengthened and modernized workplace harassment policies introduced by the government and urging government to show

continued leadership by making legislative changes to these and other pieces of legislation to ensure women and others are protected in all workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador from harassment and sexual harassment.

Mr. Speaker, how important this debate is today, how important it is to stand and acknowledge that this is still occurring every single day. We cannot tolerate that, Mr. Speaker. We have to show the leadership. We have to show the strength.

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

**MS. COADY:** We, together, can make a change and difference. Just like it’s been spoken off today already. The TIME’S UP movement and the MeToo movement who are bringing shining light on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I’ve been involved in the business community for all my career, until politics, and I can tell you there were oftentimes when I was the only female in the room. There were oftentimes I was the only female that was involved in leadership roles. There were oftentimes when there was a lot of innuendo, jokes, a little bit of harassment, then a lot more harassment for others to experience.

I think that over time, we are starting to understand the impacts of these jokes and innuendos and the harassment. We heard a very poignant speech this afternoon talking about how harassment goes a little too far. We’ve heard another one of our colleagues talk about the social media and how difficult that is for all of us, males and females, but how that bullying behaviour has to stop.

Mr. Speaker, I’ve spoken quite passionately about this in the past, about how harassment and violence and bullying has to stop in our society.

Now, how are the ways that government has been doing things – and I’ll share with you, as I’m going to, by the way, share my time with my hon. colleague. So I’m keeping a mindful eye on my time.

I want to say some of the things we are doing, Mr. Speaker. We are working very diligently on a violence prevention program. It was brought in



by a former administration. We've been working towards ensuring that violence is not acceptable in our society. We'll be going out again this year to update, advance and modernize that plan.

We have also looked at updating the Family Violence Act, that was Bill 1, as you saw most recently, Mr. Speaker. We've established a ministerial committee on violence against women and girls so we can make sure that we have an ongoing discussion amongst ministers and advancements among ministers of some of these things. Certainly, we'll be working towards – as this motion is indicating – changing some of the legislation coming forward.

We're updating the *Schools Act* this year. My hon. colleague, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has been working very diligently on that. There's a lot happening in this regard.

The reason why we have to do this, Mr. Speaker, is to address this fundamental, societal issue. I am incredibly pleased to stand here today and acknowledge, really, one particular paragraph that was in the Speech from the Throne. I just want to remind us all what it said, only because I think it was profound.

It said: "Raising standards and expectations for how our society treats women is an important focus of our Government. Violence against women and girls is one of the most serious issues facing society today. Unfortunately, many women continue to experience violence. Fifty per cent of women over the age of 15 have experienced or will experience at least one incident of sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. The likelihood of experiencing violence is tripled for Indigenous women. Violence, in any form, is unacceptable."

I think that speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker, when the Speech from the Throne contains a paragraph of that strength. I can assure you as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I can assure you as a legislator and as someone who's really committed to our community, I am working with my colleagues on doing just that. We have to address this very profound issue. How we do that is collaborating and working very strongly and well together.

The progressive – I call it very progressive – workplace harassment policy just brought in by the Minister of Finance, into government, I think will go a long way in addressing it within government. What this motion does – and I'm very proud of my colleague for bringing it forward. What this motion does it says it has to go forward beyond government and go to all workplaces across our communities and around our province.

I certainly support that. I'm going to sit down and take my seat, Mr. Speaker, so that my hon. colleague can have time to address issues from her perspective.

Thank you very much, 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 am quite pleased to stand this afternoon and speak to this private Member's motion and I thank the Member for Windsor Lake for putting this here on the floor. It's been said a number of times this afternoon, it's about time, and I have to say yes, it is about time.

Twenty-five years ago I experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, direct sexual harassment, and it was in a very progressive workplace. Twenty-five years ago we had a policy in place and 25 years ago as a woman who had already worked for decades, like many of the women who are here in our gallery today, on the issue of number one, as a feminist just on women's equality but specifically how we suffer harassment. I knew what I had to do, and I was able to do it because there was a policy in place 25 years ago.

Here we are today, in this Member's motion, asking the government to show continued leadership. I don't deny anything the minister in charge of the Women's Policy Office has said here this afternoon, but encouraging the government to show continued leadership by making legislative changes to a number of our pieces of legislation which are mentioned in the

WHEREASes – *Labour Relations Act, Labour Standards Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act* – to make changes in that legislation to ensure women and others are protected in all workplaces in our province from harassment and sexual harassment.

I would have hoped that legislation was in place, and this motion is about urging the government to put legislation in place. We do not have a bill that at this moment is talking about amendments and putting legislation in place. It's what the Member's motion is asking for. I find it significant that she is, as a Member of the caucus, is asking her government and the government of the province to do this.

I'm still hoping before the afternoon is out we will hear from the government that they are, yes, going to do what this asks. We can only urge government, even as individuals, even as a caucus, as people here in the House; we can only urge government to do something. I'm hoping before the afternoon is out, and I suspect my colleague is hoping as well, that we're going to hear government say yes, they will make amendments to legislation. We've been waiting for decades.

The women who are sitting here today with us have been waiting for decades and working for decades. What we're doing here today, we're not asking them to support us. We're finally supporting what the feminist movement, women in the community, women in the labour movement have been decades saying. So that's what we're doing here today. We have to show support. We're the ones who have to show the support and give the leadership.

If anything is important from a governmental perspective, we have legislation to cover it. Think of all the things we cover with legislation. Every movement we make is covered with legislation. So if we really think it is important to deal with harassment of women in the workplace, harassment in the workplace – period – and then specifically harassment of women, then we would have legislation.

This is not something strange. I know it's not rampant across the country; however – and this is what I want to speak to. I thank all of my colleagues who have stood and given testimony,

colleagues who have stood and talked about sexual harassment, given the statistics, given the information. So I'm not going to repeat that. I may before the rest of my time is up, but what I want to do is focus first on where we do have legislation in place in the country so that we realize we have models we can follow.

The first jurisdiction I want to talk about is the federal jurisdiction. Parliament debated legislation last fall to tighten workplace harassment rules. They have a bill, Bill C-65; it's gone through its second reading. It went through the second reading in January and it was referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development, which is holding meetings and hearing testimony from across the country.

So they're doing that right now, and note the process. It's a process we talk about all the time. We want to work together on issues. Look at what they're doing. The Standing Committee, which is an All-Party Committee, is holding meetings and hearing testimony from across the country. That's significant.

So that process is in place. What that legislation will apply to is federal workplaces, including Parliament and federally regulated private businesses such as Air Canada. The legislation specifies procedures for employers to handle allegations of harassment and bullying. There is the option of an outside investigator – so a third party outside – when the employer is too close to the situation or is named in the complaint. There are privacy rules to protect victims and it only applies, as I said, to federal workplaces.

Now, it's important to point out that we do have an excellent policy that's coming in on June 1. There's no doubt about it. I've read it. I've gone through it. It's excellent. It does follow the recommendations very closely; the 18 recommendations that were made by consultant's report of 2015. It follows those recommendations very, very closely, but it's still only a policy. I think any policy of this nature needs the strength of legislation. I absolutely believe that.

I'm urging, begging this government to take the action of saying: Yes, a bill is going to come to this House and the bill is going to look at

legislation with regard to harassment in the workplace.

In Ontario, they actually had existing legislation on sexual harassment and in 2016 – two years ago – they strengthened its existing legislation. They put more responsibility on employers to prevent and address sexual harassment. They have put their legislation in the context of their *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, which now defines workplace sexual harassment. Every employer is required to have a policy to deal with it and to investigate complaints.

The Ministry of Labour can order a third-party investigation at the employer's expense, if the ministry decides the workplaces initial investigation wasn't enough. That's the kind of strength that we need.

This is dealing with the general workplace, not just the governmental workplace. In Ontario, they've gone further than the federal government legislation is. So the legislation of the federal government is behind what's happening in other places.

I say: Why can't we do the same? We do know that we have the policy. The policy, again, is only a policy within government and government agencies. It's not a policy that is looking at the general workplace.

We do know also that in the workplaces in general, especially in unionized workplaces, that the labour movement in their collective agreements have taken great steps with regard to getting policies put in place. In many unionized labour workplaces, you have joint policies that have been worked out with the employers and sometimes, sometimes not, the language is in the collective agreements, but big efforts have been made because of the work of women inside of the labour movement.

Some non-union employers may have something as well. My workplace, where I went through sexual harassment, wasn't unionized, but it was a very progressive workplace committed to working for social justice and it was a small workplace. So it's not as frequently that you're going to find that kind of thing happen.

Having the policy by June 1 will be good. We could actually, by June 1, have a bill in place. I don't see why not. If we don't do it then, it could come in place in the fall, but the commitment to having legislation is really important. The commitment to having legislation that is covering all workplaces in the province is really important because harassment is happening.

Some of the statistics have been used, harassment is happening everywhere. In our province, gender sexual harassment is a form of discrimination under the *Human Rights Act*. We already name it there, but it's not written into our Occupational Health and Safety legislation, which would be a logical place for it to be, and where they have it in Ontario, as I've pointed out.

I don't know what's stopping the government from doing that. I don't know why the government thinks just having the policy is satisfactory. Usually, what happens is you have legislation, and policy and regulations follow. That's usually what happens.

Here we are with policy without any legislation backing it up. So I really urge this government to not only look at putting the legislation in place but putting legislation in place that covers all of the workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador. Giving teeth to the legislation so that it's not optional, nothing about it can be optional.

Many times the behaviour, the sexual – especially when it's sexual assault – is criminal behaviour. I mean that's very, very serious. It's criminal behaviour, and yet somebody, a woman or a man, but in most cases it's women, in a workplace who has been criminally assaulted feels afraid of coming forth with it because there is nothing within the workplace to support the person.

I thought the Leader of the Official Opposition, who himself has worked inside the criminal system, presented very strong arguments for the legislation. Whether it's criminal activity or non-criminal activity, there should be everything in the workplace, all workplaces, to protect the worker – all places – and it should be something that's there by law, not just a policy.

That's the difference. Legislation means it's there by law and is protected by law. A policy is not protected by law, legislation is. That's what we need. That's what women in this province are looking for.

I won't put words in her mouth, but my colleague from Windsor Lake, the Member for Windsor Lake, I'm sure that's what she's looking for because ultimate protection is what we want. Policy doesn't give ultimate protection and that's what we have to look for.

When I look through our policy document, it's good. It names who is going to be – where's the central point that women can make the complaint to. They name what body will manage the complaint system. All the pieces are there, but it's still policy. There's nothing to say who put's that in place.

Government is going to put it in place June 1, I know that, but there's nothing to say: What's the penalty if the policy isn't followed? That's not there, and it's government governing itself. So that's the issue. It's government governing ourselves. We put something in legislation, we make it legal. It's something that's protected by law, and if the women in this province deserve anything, that's what they deserve.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, every individual has the right to come to work to an environment where they do not face harassment, violence or discrimination. Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe the statistics are higher than one in 10.

This is a difficult day for females in this House of Assembly, but it is a day of opportunity. It is a day to direct change. It is a day to lead.

Mr. Speaker, we fully believe that harassment and violence are not acceptable in any form. I fully believe this, and as the Minister of Service NL, I have the responsibility for the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The act

focuses on protecting the health and safety of workers by setting certain minimum conditions for all workplaces in the province, not just in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Sections 22 to 24 of the act deal specifically with violence prevention in the workplace.

In the regulations, Mr. Speaker, violence is defined as: "An attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of physical force to cause injury to a worker, and includes threatening statements or behavior which gives a worker reason to believe that he or she is at risk of injury."

The intent of these sections of the regulations is for an employer to address all forms of violence in the workplace through policies and procedures. It also identifies the employer's duty to inform workers about risks and precautions.

Mr. Speaker, since our government came into power in 2015, we have been reviewing various pieces of legislation to ensure it is relevant for the people we serve. Through a number of means, such as public consultations and jurisdictional scans, Mr. Speaker, we have reviewed best practices.

The occupational health and safety regulations, as an example, focus on violence in the workplace between a non-worker and a worker. This is something we are currently reviewing as we want to ensure that all aspects of the worker's safety are captured in the regulations.

Mr. Speaker, we recently appointed Members to the Advisory Council on Occupational Health and Safety, reaffirming our commitment to occupational health and safety throughout the province. The advisory council will advise me, as the Minister of Service NL.

When this committee meets, Mr. Speaker, I will refer the matter of violence in the workplace between a non-worker and a worker as it is currently defined in our regulations to the council for review and recommendations on expanding the definition.

I will also, Mr. Speaker, have the council look at harassment, not just violence. I commit here today as the Minister of Service NL, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, in February, as minister, I released a five-year workplace injury prevention strategy advancing a strong safety culture in Newfoundland and Labrador. The strategy notes that over the past decade the rate of workplace violence has increased from 5.2 injuries per 10,000 workers to 8.9. Mr. Speaker, that is an increase of 71 per cent.

Occupational Health and Safety legislation requires risk assessments to be completed for workplace violence and working alone. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we know these risk assessments are not widely employed in workplaces, and more education and enforcement is required and will happen.

As a government, we understand the importance of working with our stakeholders to address issues they feel need to be brought to the forefront. Workplace harassment is certainly one of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, a number of our stakeholders are here today listening to this private Member's resolution. A number of ministers from our government recently met with the Federation of Labour and Unifor primarily to discuss the issue of domestic violence. However, this also has implications regarding workplace harassment policies and legislation. It was agreed that we will continue these discussions.

Mr. Speaker, research shows that incidents of harassment and violence in Canadian workplaces often go unreported because people fear retaliation. Our government, however, is sending a clear message on this topic. We take all instances of harassment in the workplace very seriously, and will not tolerate them. MHAs in this House of Assembly will not tolerate them. In fact, we are focused on improving outcomes for the people of our province in eliminating violence of all forms.

Just recently, our government also announced that we are introducing amendments to the *Family Violence Protection Act* to better support adult victims of domestic violence and their children. The amendments will expand the

definition of family violence to include emotional, psychological and financial harm.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to state once again that every single one of us have the right to feel safe, no matter where we are. This includes the workplace. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us to spread that message of tolerance, respect and appreciation of differences.

It is also incumbent upon all of us to strive to create a workplace, an environment which cultivates teamwork, co-operation and positive interaction. Harassment of any type is not acceptable. And as my colleague from Windsor Lake said, we need to do more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

Thank you to my hon. colleague from Windsor Lake for bringing this piece of legislation forward. There are only a number of us females here in this House, and, yes, we all have been elected to the House of Assembly to represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are bringing in laws like this and we're bringing them forward.

It is not acceptable what's going on, and we have to stop it here. It was okay, people thought, years ago; years ago when people, actually back in the 50s, didn't know any better. Sexual abuse, things that were happening, were kind of accepted, but due to the education today of our young people, the MeToo movement, all of this has brought things forward to make a difference, and I look in our galleries today.

A few weeks ago I spoke on Women's International Day about strong women. Yes, we all have to be strong.

My colleague from Harbour Grace - Bay Roberts today got up and spoke. She was strong

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**AN HON. MEMBER:** Port de Grave.

**MS. PARSLEY:** Port de Grave, sorry – she was strong, because in order to bring this forward – we can't sweep it under the rug anymore. It's horrible what's happening in our workplaces. If you can't get up in the morning, get dressed and go to work and do your day's job without having to worry about someone sexually harassing you, it's not normal. With this piece of legislation that our Member has brought forward, I'm hoping things our government is working towards making things better.

Our Justice Minister just recently had a day where all the colleagues here in the House want to – violence against women. I had the honour that day of sitting next to a group of women who explained their stories. It was horrendous. I was fortunate enough to sit next to a female officer of the RCMP who took down the whole RCMP because she was brave enough to bring it forward. Can you imagine the RCMP, who we all tremble at if we get hauled in for a speeding ticket or not – but she took it on and she brought it forward and she won.

When she told me the story of when she got pregnant, you know the uniforms they wear with the wide belts, and she had to hide her pregnancy for four months. Can you imagine how uncomfortable that was every day with this wide belt and trying to breathe? It was horrific. She wrote a book, she won her settlement, and she brought it to us.

The MeToo movement has brought many things forward, but I can tell you I'm not going to go with what other people have said. I'm just going to speak for a few minutes because there are other people who want to speak and I think everybody needs to speak, but I will tell you as people in this gallery today, I know that this government will do what it can to change the legislation. It needs to be changed. We need to be safe.

I work here with Members in this hon. House and let me tell you, it's a pleasure to work with a male and female. I look forward to getting up in the morning and coming to work because I know it's a place where we can all work.

With that said, I'm going to sit and let someone else have a chance to speak.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'm very happy to stand here to support this private Member's motion. I, too, would like to thank the Member for Windsor Lake and all my colleagues who have spoken in the House and all the women for decades who have had the courage and the wisdom to speak out through the decades on these issues. We know how important it is – everyone has said that here today – to ensure respectful, safe workplaces for everyone.

One of the things we've often seen, Mr. Speaker, particularly in the women's movement, in the anti-racist movement and those working for the rights of LGBTQ two-spirited people, our indigenous people, that our rights are never given to us. They, in fact, are hard won.

This is about rights. This is about the right to work in a safe and an inclusive workplace which we want for all of our people, for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, we must not forget that those rights are never given to us, they're hard won. Our gallery is filled with women who know that, who have worked so hard for decades to ensure that women and girls have rights that not only protect us but allow us to thrive and to fulfill our dreams, and to fulfill the dreams of our families.

So this is a good thing we are doing here today, Mr. Speaker. The other thing is it also points out to the issue how important it is, because this should have been done a long time ago.

As my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi has said, 25 years ago she was in a place of employment that had a specific policy. So when she was affected she knew what she could do, where the supports were and what could happen. The map was laid out.

That's what this private Member's motion is doing. It's to say to government make it clear, give it teeth, show women, show racialized communities, show members from the LGBTQ two-spirited community how this can be done so you know what your rights are, so the employer knows what their obligation is. That's what this is about. We all know there is no longer any tolerance for this.

The other thing is we know that laws do not change hearts. They really don't, but what they do is protect those from those who are heartless, and that's what we're talking about here today as well. I believe we can do this. It's not going to cost us any money, so there's no excuse there. There's certainly a public will. I'm hoping there is a unanimous political will to do this as well.

We know the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want it. They want it for their children. They want it for their mothers and their aunts and their daughters. We all want this. It's the right thing to do.

Again, it shows how important it is to have women at the tables where decisions are being made, because this won't happen without women at the table, without racialized people at the table, without people who are living with disabilities at the table, without indigenous people at the table, without people from the LGBTQ two-spirited communities at the table. These kinds of issues are not brought to the table and are not addressed fully and comprehensively.

That's another lesson we learned today by the introduction of this private Member's motion. Of course, my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and the Official Opposition, we've all said we're going to support this and that's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to be able to see this House close at the end of today and feel that, wow; we have done something really, really good, something significant here.

There are so many lessons for us to learn about this. From now on what we need to do, every one of us in this House, we have to keep asking ourselves – whether it's in special committee meetings, whether it's in the way we hire folks in our employ – who is not at the table? Whose

voice is not at the table? Because it is so important – again, we show here today that it's so important that women were at the table for this to come forward.

One would have hoped, when we've heard stories from the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, that people tell their stories. I have a story, too. I can remember being horribly sexually harassed in a workplace when I was 16 years old, and had my father not been in the parking lot waiting for me to finish my job in a grocery store, I don't know what would have happened. That was my safety and my escape.

We all have stories like that. We all know them in our family members. We all know them. And God, how it breaks our heart when we know it happens to our daughters. This is a little bit of extra safety and a little bit of extra protection.

How discouraging it is that in 2018 we're only now doing this. One would have hoped that any successive government would have done it much sooner, but they haven't so here we are. We're going to do it. I assume we're going to do it. I assume it's not just going to be encouraging to kind of look at and maybe we'll think about it but actually do it because there is no longer any good reason not to do it. We know that.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** It's not going to cost us any money. It's the right thing to do. I don't believe that there's anybody, any Member in this House, who can go back to their district and say: You know, b'y, I just couldn't support it because I'm not exactly sure. I'm sure there's nobody in this House who can go back to their districts and justify to the good people in their district, to the women in their district, to the racialized people in their district, to the people in the LGBTQ2 spirited community, people with disabilities, folks who are often – all of us in those categories – most targeted because we are perceived to be the most vulnerable. So I don't think anybody can go back to their communities and justify why they wouldn't do this.

There is also another issue, Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise just before sitting down and that is when we look at our budget. Unless we do whatever is necessary to lift women out of

poverty, women will continue to be vulnerable in places of work. Women will continue to be harassed in places of work.

I would like to, again, thank the women in the anti-violence communities, the women in the labour movement who have been incredible leaders in this area, who have educated their members, who have lobbied on federal, municipal and provincial levels, after they'd done their own work in their own places of work in their own unions. They have been leaders in this area and I would like to thank them for that leadership that they have played in this.

So, again, I know that when we pass this all – and it mustn't be just lip service. It mustn't just be encouraging government to look at pieces of legislation. Let's see concrete action, concrete legislation, embedded, absolutely embedded in our legislation, in our three pieces of workplace legislation. Let's just do it so we can move on with trying to look at ways to make our province prosperous once again.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go home happy, if I feel that's going to happen here. I know that the good folks up there in the gallery are going to go home happy. I assume that our families and our communities are going to happy that this has happened as well. If, in fact, it moves beyond just encouraging the possibility of the maybe, of wouldn't it be nice to actually establishing solid legislation with real teeth to make a difference in the lives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

It's certainly an opportunity, which I really appreciate, to be able to stand in this House today. We will be supporting, of course, this private Member's resolution that has been put forward by the Member for Windsor Lake.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today not just as Premier of this province. I've listened to a lot of stories that people today told about various experiences. All of us in this House, in our own right, are leaders. A lot of us come from leadership backgrounds within our communities, Mr. Speaker.

As the Leader of the Opposition already may have made mention, you come from a perspective of being a male really in this, but typically, as you know, it's been the female, young women and women in our society who has been impacted in a disproportionate way.

I can share many of my own experiences working in an environment that was really dominated primarily by young women. Mr. Speaker, I also speak from the experience of a male who happens to be a son, happens to be an uncle, who happens to be a father, happens to be a grandfather, Mr. Speaker, and someone who has had many women in our society share their experiences with me.

I think I will take a few minutes today just to share just a few because we talk often about harassment, sexual assault and all kinds of assault that happens. If you look through our news stories today there are even more examples that are happening in our communities even today.

Mr. Speaker, I remember vividly one story that was shared with me from a senior who called me just two days before Christmas and was looking for a safe place to live. As many of you would know, I spent some time housing seniors in seniors' homes and so on, but I always remember the story of an elderly woman who was looking for a safe place to live just prior to Christmas. What she was trying to escape wasn't an assault or harassment from someone she didn't know, it was actually her son.

The policy, even within government, for those of us who are homeowners, really didn't even allow for this woman to be brought in because there was policy things, guidelines that you have to go through, assessments and all that would have to be done. I can remember going to the elderly woman and saying: We have a spot for you. Mr. Speaker, she spent the last years of her life in that home.



But as has been mentioned already, in order for that chain to stop, there needed to be someone to intervene with the son because I wasn't prepared to be a bystander in this situation. I wasn't prepared to see someone who had lived their life and someone not to intervene or advocate on their part.

We have people in the gallery here today, Mr. Speaker, in their own right, I can almost assure you there is a story behind every face that's in this gallery here today. They are advocating for somebody or some situation that they are aware of.

Mr. Speaker, as we stand here today, and as Premier of this province and as the minister have already said, we've had some ministers speak to this, it's been questioned whether government will support this and really begin a process to make change. People wonder why in 2018 we're still hearing these stories.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk about the past but the opportunity exists here today. There are still too many people who are still in the shadows with secrets and stories that they still hide.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned about which drop of water that actually caused the cup to overflow. What he was referring to is where is the tipping point in society that causes the impact on someone's life, causes an impact for someone, in many cases, to harm themselves or it leads them into a state of depression or anxiety, but it is impactful. There are too many women, too many females, too many young women, elderly women in our society today because someone didn't intervene.

Sometimes not stepping in or not intervening can be that tipping point. Sometimes doing nothing can be the tipping point. So we have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, as leaders, not just in this House of Assembly, but leaders in our society, in a more general sense, so that we give people the opportunity to speak and to speak up, not only just for themselves, but for others as well.

Mr. Speaker, as has been said already, we started this process and there have been some changes that we've made already, but in order for those changes to have the momentum that's required

to really effect change so that it actually affects and people's lives are changed and people are comfortable in stepping up – the Member mentioned earlier about sometimes just having your name appear on a court docket would simply mean that you're not willing to put your name out there to actually stand up for yourself. These are little simple things that can actually mean a big difference.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand here today and I've listened to all the stories that have been told, people speaking about experience and as legislators the opportunity that we have – there has been three pieces of legislation that's been mentioned already; some work has already been done. I will mention this before I conclude my remarks – I've just got a few minutes left – I also want to think of the disproportionate amount of young indigenous women and girls in our society today. We see the national inquiry that we are participating in, Mr. Speaker, and our inquiry into Innu children in care. As we work with the Nunatsiavut Government today, this process and work has already begun. I'm sure today as we stand – and if indeed there is a vote or whatever happens, we will be supporting this.

We have started the process to make meaningful, real change in legislation that's required to set a standard. Maybe no other province –

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, I have about one minute left before I turn it back to my colleague. I think the responsibility is on us, as males, and is on us, as leaders, in our society today to begin the process, and we will.

I will finish my remarks today by standing here as Premier, father, grandfather and so on, in society for many, many years, I've heard many stories that you should not have to listen to in the future.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much and we will be supporting this PMR today.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Windsor Lake to close the debate.

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

I certainly want to thank all the Members of the House today who participated in this afternoon's debate. Although that seems like an inappropriate word to call it, but that is the technical word. I do want to say a particular thank you to the Members who spoke and also the ones who sat in the House and listened to the debate, which is oftentimes equally as important in a debate.

The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune who talked about being tired of waiting and it's time to make sure that the bad behaviour has fewer places to hide in the shadows, which I thought was an appropriate thing to remind us all of before we do vote.

I want to thank the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave for personally sharing her own story. A real example of what I said in my opening comments about the emotional impact, the career impact and the family impact that harassment can have.

I want to thank the Member for Topsail - Paradise. I think his comments about employers and leaders responding to employees and how they do that is critical in ensuring that the glass that's covered doesn't overflow. Thank you for sharing that story.

To the Member for St. John's West who spoke about government policy, as it relates to employees of government. I certainly want to say thank you to the Minister of Finance, the minister of the Women's Policy Office and the Premier for continuing the work and making the policy changes happen inside core government that needed to happen around employment policy, as government is an employer.

I want to also thank the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's. I have every confidence under her leadership in the Department of Service NL that when she says she's going to do something, she's going to make it happen and she knows I'll be hounding her to make it so. I also thought her words that today is the day of opportunity and

today is a day to lead were quite apropos for this afternoon's discussion.

The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi spoke about the decades that women have been waiting for laws to protect them. I think it's important for all of us to hear that it is decades that women have been waiting and others have been waiting for protection in workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador, public and private and non-traditional workplaces.

I want to also thank the Member for Harbour Main who spoke and talked about the need to change things and her believe that this is the group and this is the Legislature that can make that change happen. I also want to thank the Member for St. John's Centre who spoke about the importance of respectful workplaces that are safe for everyone in our community, and that no one is left feeling unsafe as they try to support themselves and their families and their communities in their efforts to be a good employer.

I certainly want to thank the Premier for his comments and his commitment to leading, not only change in the area of occupational health and safety or safety in the workplaces, and particularly legislation that governs workplaces, but also his comments that were broader about other things that our government has planned to improve laws as it relates to women and children, in particular, in our province. I thank him for his leadership there.

Mr. Speaker, it was referenced earlier about other provinces that have made changes to their law. I want to specifically talk about Ontario for a minute. Ontario, as I understand it, made changes in 2011 to their *Occupational Health and Safety Act* specifically around harassment, sexual harassment, and some would say harassment would include bullying.

They actually went back to the drawing board in 2016 and further defined sexual harassment and raised the bar even higher. They also addressed domestic leave as part of that effort. Something that, at another date, I'm sure we'll have a discussion in this House about how important that is to provide domestic leave to women who face challenges at home, not just in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for all of us to remind ourselves that harassment can ruin an individual's life forever. It has the ability to not only affect the emotions but also the physical and mental well-being of the person, a woman or other. It can even lead to more major problems such as illnesses and, as has been referred to in this House, death through suicide. Fairness and respect must always be present in the workplace to maintain balanced working relationships.

I want to say a particular thank you to the members of the community who joined us today here in the gallery and also those who joined us at home watching this private Member's resolution.

We have the privilege as Members of this House of Assembly to sit here and create the laws. That process often happens in a variety of ways. It can happen from an individual in the House bringing something forward, it can happen from the bureaucracy bringing something forward, it can happen from community engagement, but, at the end of the day, it is the 40 Members of this House, 39 including the Speaker, that create the laws that govern our province.

Despite the fact, as was acknowledged earlier this afternoon, that this is a difficult conversation I think for all of us to talk about, it is a conversation that we must have because we have the privilege of sitting in this House and making those laws. Policies, platitudes, programs all serve a purpose, but at the end of the day it's the law and how we change that legislation and how we change the regulations to reflect the changes in legislation that ultimately improve the accountability in our community.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, and understanding we're moments away from closing the House for Easter break, I want to thank everybody who participated in the debate, and thank the colleagues who listened and I look forward to the call for the vote on this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I would like to remind all Members that the Social Services Committee will be meeting here in the Chamber at 17:30 hours, 30 minutes from now, to review the Estimates of the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

This being Wednesday, and consistent with Standing Order 9, this House do now adjourn until tomorrow, Monday, the 16th day of April at 1:30 o'clock.